

HCP 2012 October trip report¹

Executive Summary

- Six new students funded by HCP at Kampong Cham;
- Five new students funded by HCP at Battambang;
- New interns recruited at both Kampong Cham and Battambang to fill vacancies;
- Interns will now report to Director of Operations (Alex Willemyns) instead of HCP President;
- Total number of supported students down as more students are self-supporting or have graduated, which is reflected in a decrease of total tuition payments by HCP to \$7240 (from \$8225 in 2011);
- Most students who have graduated are currently earning sub-repayment salaries. This is expected to change quickly and keeping track of this is an important role for HCP interns;
- One student at Battambang has dropped out of university under unclear circumstances which requires further research;
- HCP Operations Committee expanded to include Morten and Panha Daugbjerg, who currently reside in Sihanoukville; and
- Possible future strategic options were noted including:
 - Assisting with a new postgraduate university in Cambodia using international lecturers; and
 - Providing certificates of appreciation to locals providing operational or material support to HCP.

¹ Written 31 October 2012, minor edits 13 January 2013

Introduction

The 2012 official trip was from 26 September to 15 October, and included only John Humphreys. Flights were with Cathay Pacific to Bangkok and cost \$1323 return. An additional Bangkok to Phnom Penh flight on 26 September cost \$105. All other travel was done by bus, with the most expensive trip costing \$17. Accommodation was in guesthouse or cheap hotel, and cost between \$3 and \$12 per night. As usual, HCP did not pay for these costs.

Besides stopovers in Hong Kong and Bangkok, destinations for this trip (in order) included Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Sihanoukville, and Battambang.

Tuition payments were \$4140 to UME-KPC and \$3100 to UME-BB, giving a total of \$7240. This is a decrease from \$8225 in 2011 due to the decrease in the number of active students in Battambang.

Of the tuition fees, \$300 came from credits at Battambang (see discussion below), and the rest was paid in cash to UME-BB (\$2800), draw-down on cash balance at UME-KPC (\$110) and bank transfer to UME-KPC (\$4030).

Kampong Cham

The main work at Kampong Cham was done between Monday 1 October and Wednesday 3 October. The intake followed the usual process, with an “information session” on the first day, followed by interviews on the 2nd day, and then the signing of the contracts on the 3rd day. The meeting with continuing students was on the second day. Srun Sarak did the translating.

Seven potential students (with sponsors) came to the information session. Of those, four came for interviews the next day. The potential students who didn't come to interviews were Yen Kuok, Soun Sarum, and Chuon Rothy.

An additional four others came for interviews, so there were eight interviews in total. Six students were selected, one withdrew, and one was rejected. The selected students were So Vuoch Nea, Seab Tiasrea, Sorn Vannavy, Oeurn Srey Mom, Theun Pisey, and Kem Phearun. More details on the interviewed candidates can be found in the appendix.

Three of the selected students were admitted for the usual HCP price of \$225/year, while the three other students had partial scholarships, so that their tuition fees were \$150 (Tiasrea), \$180 (VouchNea) and \$210 (Vannavy).

The 2008 generation from UME-KPC have now graduated, though none are earning enough to start making HCP payments. Lot Soklin has a probation job in Phnom Penh (\$70/m) and may move on to a full time job soon and be able to start making payments. Kim Sophina is currently working as a housekeeper (\$60/m) while looking for professional work. Nhil Chanty currently works for a beauty shop (\$50/m), but has an interview soon with a cosmetics company. There was no information on Neang Ravy.

Of the 2009 generation, only one student has continued with HCP. Phal Bunnak is now in his last year while also working as a tobacco salesman. Von Raksa is now paying his own way through University, and has started making HCP payments. He earns \$150/m and has started paying 10%. Choeurn Nith has suspended his studies, and Ngorn Lihor is now paying her own way through University while working at an agriculture school (\$30/m). Sueng Vuoch Leang quit University in her first semester and is considered “lost” to HCP.

For the 2010 generation, six out of six students are continuing and doing well. Oeurn Chan Thoeun came first in his year academically and could be considered a worthy recipient of a student prize if/when HCP starts to award those. Three of the students have jobs already, one of them (Chhuong Malin) works at reception at UME-KPC. One other had a job at a rubber plantation, but had to stop because they wanted him to work seven days a week so he wouldn't be able to study. The other two have not been working. None have offered to start paying early and all still want HCP finance.

For the 2011 generation, five out of seven are doing well, Yam Soung has dropped out of University and out of contact (people suspect he may have moved to Thailand for work) while Chi Esas is having some difficulty with University because she is required to spend lots of time helping on her parents farm. HCP has continued to support six students (including Esas). Only Heang Bros is working (volunteer at UME-KPC), and he also lives at the University.

In total, there are 13 continuing students and six new students, giving a total of 19 HCP students now being financed. Of these, 16 students have fees of \$225 (\$3600) while three students have partial scholarships (\$150 + \$180 + \$210). Total tuition costs for UME-KPC were \$4140, which is confirmed by receipts. This was only a marginal increase on the 2011 tuition costs of \$4050.

Unlike previous years, this money was paid by a combination of bank transfer (\$4030 + \$10 fee on the 5th of October) and using our cash balance at the University (\$110). Given a starting cash balance of \$492, this brings our remaining cash balance at UME-KPC to \$382 (at beginning of October).

Strangely, \$30 of the bank transfer has gone missing somewhere between our bank (Citibank account in the name of Rachel Connor) and their bank (Canadia Bank in the name of Mao Dung and Srun Saraks). At the time of writing, this hasn't been resolved.

Also, the original HCP intern was unable to continue in her role, and so has been replaced by Sok Mouy, who started in October. Under the new HCP management system, Mouy will report to the Director of Operations (Alex Willemyns) instead of reporting directly to the HCP President. Mouy is paid \$20/month to work for a few hours per week updating details about HCP students.

Battambang

The main work at Battambang was done between Tuesday 9 October and Thursday 11 October. The intake followed the usual three stage process (information session – interviews – contract signing) in the “American corner”, and the translating was done by Kim Peseth and sometimes Chan Sam An. The meeting with contuing students was on the second day.

Five potential students (with sponsors) came to the information session. Of those, four came for interviews the next day. The potential student who didn't come to the interview was Sun Sokloun.

One additional potential student came for an interview, so there were five interviews in total. All five students were selected. They are Khun Sarin, Khek Khemara, Hean Hoeun, Ponn Sarath, and Phon Pisey. More details about the interviewed candidates can be found in the appendix.

We arrived just after the end of the tuition discount window, but discussions with the university President (Thun Peakday) resulted in his allowing HCP students the discount price of \$200/year. It is worth noting that Peakday has always been very helpful in his dealings with HCP, and he (along with previous UME-BB contacts Phann Sophon, Chan Sam An, and Kim Peseth) could be given a HCP "thank you" certificate at some stage.

The 2007 and 2008 generations have now both graduated. Nhim Chamnan continues to make her 20% payments (\$30/m) and she will soon have finished her obligation to HCP. Phlong Phutearithy volunteered briefly at UME-BB but is now unemployed. Chim Saroum was working previously in Banteay Menchay and had committed to pay, but logistical difficulties meant that he never started paying. He has now returned to Battambang, and although his income is below the current preferred threshold (he earns \$60/m) he has offered to start paying because he is keen to contribute to HCP.

Of the 2008-generation, all three are working but earning below the preferred threshold of \$100/m (\$55/m, \$70/m, \$50/m). It is exactly for these sorts of students that we need our interns, so that we can check regularly with them to see if their income has improved and they can start making payments.

For the 2009 generation, three out of nine have now graduated, but do not currently have proper jobs. One student (Sou Chan Thin), who is now paying for himself, has a good income but has not yet started paying. We do not require students to start paying until they have finished their undergraduate degree, so this is his choice. Of the remaining five, one can now pay for himself (Phon Piseth), three others require ongoing HCP support, and one student (Chhen Chhan Chhporn) has dropped out of University in unclear circumstances. This is a strange change since Chhporn did come last year to ask for continuing support. Further research is needed. Since we have not been provided with any information, we have assumed that Chhporn did not do his third year and so HCP receives a \$200 credit for his tuition fees, though this may change when we find out the details of Chhporn's activities.

For the 2010 generation, two students continue to need HCP support, Vann Vibol continues to delay his Cambodian study while he is in Thailand, and Souen Sim is now able to pay for himself. Sim still came to the students meeting and given his good English he helped to translate when needed. The fifth original student (Sung Nann) dropped out early and is now considered "lost" to HCP.

For the 2011 generation, out of the original seven, one student (Hoeurn Kim Han) has quit University. This was the student who had very poor school grades, and this re-enforces the need to maintain a minimum academic requirement. HCP received a half-year credit of \$100 because she did not attend 2nd semester. Another student (Nga Sao Nou) is now able to pay for himself. The other five students all indicated they continued to need HCP finance, though Son Pheaktra was not available at the time of the visit and information about his situation had to be gathered later.

In total, there are ten continuing students and five new students, giving a total of 15 HCP students now being financed. Of those, 13 students have tuition fees of \$200 (\$2600), while the other two students have tuition fees of \$250 (\$500) giving a total of \$3100.

There is \$100 credit due to Hoeurn Kim Han quitting University, and potentially another \$200 credit for Chhen Chhan Chhporn quitting University (though this issue is still uncertain as we don't know the details of Chhporn's situation). Assuming HCP receives full credit for Chhporn, total payment is \$2800 cash (+\$300 credit) to pay the total tuition fees of \$3100.

This is a reduction from \$4175 last year, since there were more HCP students graduating (or self-paying) than there were new students starting.

We only have receipts for 14 students and \$2900 since information about Son Pheaktra (requiring an extra \$200) and Chhen Chhan Chhporn (providing a potential credit of \$200) was not available at the time of the visit. At the moment, the working assumption is that the Chhporn credit can be used to pay the \$200 for Pheaktra. The operations committee will need to collect the additional receipt at their next convenience, and details about the Chhporn credit will need to be finalised with the University.

The HCP intern for August and September (Kim Peseth) has received a promotion within UME and so is being replaced by Chouert Chhara, who started as the HCP intern in October. As part of the new HCP management structure, Chhara will answer to Morten Daugbjerg and Alex Willemyns in the first instance, instead of reporting directly to the HCP President.

Peseth was paid \$40 for his two months work. Additional money was left with Chan Sam An to bring the cash balance to \$546 (11 October 2012).

Other activities

On the first weekend in Cambodia (29 & 30 September), the UME-KPC hosted a ceremony, soccer tournament and party to celebrate the start of the new academic year. The special guest for the event was His Excellency General Dr Hun Maneth, who is a general in the Royal Cambodian Army and the son of the Prime Minister Hun Sen.

On the second weekend I went to Sihanoukville to visit with Morten Daugbjerg and his wife Panha, who have agreed to join the HCP operations committee.

While in Phnom Penh, I arranged for a tailor-made suit for \$110. Recommended. I also had discussions with various people (including Muon Veasna and Huy Sambo) about the prospect of starting a postgraduate university in Cambodia, using foreigner researchers and lecturers.

In Kampong Cham I went to the radio station to do some live talk-back about UME-KPC and HCP. I had done this on a previous trip for one hour, but this time the radio station lost electricity early in the program so the show was cancelled.

Appendix: Students interviewed

UME – Battambang

Khun Sarin (m27) – E30. HRM because important thing to study and good for success (\$150/m). Originally failed high school, waited two years and re-took exam, then passed in 2010. Lives in pagoda for the past six years. Previously taught English, now studies English and Buddhism. Speaks good English. No scholarship. Has one parent (father 75) who lives with brother, who is a peasant farmer. From Kampong Thom. Came to BB to study Buddhism. Alternative plan is to wait until he has enough money and to hope for a chance to study some day. Sponsor agrees. He would be the first in his family to go to University. Heard HCP from friend (Chim Saroum). ACCEPTED.

Khek Khemara (m20) – D56. Banking, to make money (\$100/m). No English. Finished school in 2012 and then has stayed home. Did not get scholarship. No parents (divorced & left), so lives with retired grandparents in BB. Has bicycle. Current job is in restaurant (\$70/m) but prefers banking because income can increase. Sponsors agree. First in family for University. Heard from friend who studies at UME. ACCEPTED.

Hean Hoeum (m27) – E. Management, so he can manage an electricity business (\$300/m). Not enough time to study now, helps at home on farm. Parents are farmers now. Failed school in 2005, waited to do it again, then passed in 2010. Studied a short course in electricity in Siem Reap and then worked there for \$50/m. Still works, now studies electricity in tech university at BB, then heard of HCP. Can live with cousin in BB and get another job here. Didn't know about scholarships. Family is poor and has many siblings. First in family to University. Alternative plan is to keep his Siem Reap job. Sponsor (cousin) agrees. Heard from friend of friend of UME student. His main priority now is to study. ACCEPTED.

Ponn Sarath (m26) – E32. English, to become an English teacher (\$150/m). Failed school in 2005, then came back and passed in 2012. Friends with Hean Hoeum (above) and lives with his cousin. Family in Kandal. Parents divorced so he lives with his grandmother. Grandmother and cousin makes clothes. After 2005 went to PP for work (2 years), then to BB to live with sister in countryside (farmer). Sister came to BB with her husband to farm better land. Now lives with friend and works in restaurant (\$60/m). Good English. Alternative is continue with work and try to get a better job. Didn't know about scholarships. Family is poor. Sponsor (brother-in-law) agrees. Heard of HCP from friend who studies at UME. Life goal is to be good English teacher. ACCEPTED.

Phon Pisey (f20) – C92. Accounting, because easy to get job (\$200/m). Brother from 3rd generation HCP, now graduated, works as accountant. But he is paying for himself now, so can't help. Applied for scholarship, but didn't have response. Finished school in 2011, then worked as waitress in restaurant (\$45/m). Mum is sick, dad is moto-dop, not enough money. Wants to study & work at the same time. Alternative is to earn money and hope to study in the future. Family live in BB. Sponsor (father) agrees and encouraged her to apply. Heard of HCP from family. No English. Long term plan is to earn money for family and save for a shop. ACCEPTED.

UME – Kampong Cham

So Vuoch Nea (f18) – E32. Marketing, for job (\$150+/m). Finished school in 2012, no extra study, help family on farm now. Lives 1.5 hours away (70km) but can rent in KPC. Oldest in the family. Has 40% scholarship at UME (\$180). Parents are poor farmers, mum makes scarfs. Plan to do other short courses at charity organisations (computers or chinese). Alternative plan is to be a translator (\$120/m), but University is better because income can increase. Heard of HCP from Sarak talking to schools. Hadn't finished application at the time. ACCEPTED (because of scholarship).

Oeurn Srey (f22) – D71. Accounting, because always wanted (\$100/m). Didn't seem to understand the 10% idea, but eventually agreed. Sister of Oeurn Chan Tun (who got 1st in class this year). Hadn't finished application at the time. Finished school in 2011. Said she studied French for four years, but can only say "bonjour". Failed English. Last year health not good, helped with housework and helped blind grandmother. No scholarship. Poor family, parents are builders, sister works in factory. Lives in KPC. Alternative plan is to work in factory (\$70/m) in KPC. Sponsor (parents) agree. MAYBE... later ACCEPTED (when Chhouk Sotheary withdrew).

Lek Phearak (m18) – E15. Rural development to help develop homeland (\$80/m). Didn't seem too smart. Kept answering the wrong questions, didn't understand HCP, couldn't work out what 10% meant. Finished school in 2012, didn't study extra, no time to read. Family poor, dad is old and mum picks water-flowers. Five children in family. No scholarship. Older siblings are farmers. Lives 30km (Suong district), 30-40 minutes away. First time coming to KPC (the biggest city he had seen). Wants to live in pagoda. Alternative is to work in construction (\$70/m). Couldn't explain why university would be better than his alternative. Heard of HCP from somebody in his village. REJECTED.

Sorn Vannavy (f20) – D62. Accounting, to work in company (\$150+/m). Finished school in 2012. Sister of HCP Sorn Sambo. Scholarship at 30% (\$210). Dad retired, mum does housework and sells vegetables, seven siblings. Lives 30 min away, wants to rent in KPC with brother's support, and study during the week. Alternative uncertain, maybe sell products (max \$100/m). Heard from brother Sambo. Sponsors (parents) agree. ACCEPTED.

Seab Tiasrea (f19) – C89. Accounting, for easy job (\$170/m). Scholarship of 50% (\$150). Family lost mango business – fixed buy price but sell price dropped so lost money. Parents now working in Thailand. Lives with grandmother & aunt, 20km away (30 min). Would rent. Alternative is to get a loan (no interest, from family) but prefer HCP because she wants to help herself without outside help. Heard of HCP from father of Sorn Vannavy (above). Sponsors (parents) agree. ACCEPTED.

Chhouk Sotheary (f20) – D69. Accounting, for a job (\$150/m). Finished school in 2012, failed chemistry. Scholarship at another university (agriculture). Family cannot pay big amount, dad works in security, brother helps family already. Lives in KPC. Alternative maybe secondary teacher (\$80/m). Heard of HCP from cousin who applied in 2010 (Sokkong, who pulled out later). Parents didn't know and didn't come to information session. WITHDREW.

Theun Pisey (m22) – D70. Marketing/management because likes it (\$120/m). Finished school 2011, went to PP to work on electricity (\$120/m but not regular) and lives there now. No scholarship. Dad is soldier, mum moved to Prey Vihear, don't have enough money. Lives with uncle in KPC or cousin in PP. Likes HCP because family not here to help him, and has no collateral. Alternative is to try to find

another University, maybe Buddhist. Heard of HCP from neighbour who heard from Sphina (HCP grad). Sponsors (parents) agreed. ACCEPTED.

Kem Phearun (m18) – E30. Banking, for jobs (\$200/m). Finished school in 2012, failed five and doesn't know why, but speaks decent English. From Kandal province, cousin of Ratana (HCP) who is nephew of Mao Dung (UME owner). Moved to KPC 10 days ago and lives at UME. Alternative, ask mother (in Kandal) to sell animal so he can study in PP. Or try to get money from brother. Came to KPC to ask for help from Dung, but Dung passed him to HCP. No scholarship. Parents are peasant farmers. Prefers HCP to animal/brother strategy or any other approach. Seems honest & sincere, and like a nice guy. Heard of HCP from Ratana. Sponsors (parents) agree. MAYBE, then ACCEPTED.

Note: The details in brackets indicate their gender and age. The first piece of information (eg E32) indicates their school grade.