

Human Capital Project

2009 September trip report¹

The official 2009 HCP trip to Cambodia went for two weeks, from Saturday 5/09/09 to Sunday 20/09/09. The touring party included John Humphreys, Kristin Tan and Joseph Clark, and the trip included Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Siem Reap, Battambang and Sihanoukville.

In addition to HCP work, the trip included two nights at Siem Reap to see Angkor Wat, two nights at the beach in Sihanoukville, and three nights in Phnom Penh to see the capital and the killing fields.

Kampong Cham (KC)

In discussions with UME-KC staff (including Muon Veasna and Srun Sarak), we considered the opportunity for HCP to arrange for foreign teachers to go and work temporarily at the University. See Appendix A for more details.

HCP work in KC was done on Thursday (10/09/09) and Friday (11/09/09), and involved a meeting with previous students, two group interviews, and a contract signing ceremony. See Appendix B for the meeting procedures.

The meeting with previous students (Sophina, Soklin, Nhil, Ravy) included a discussion of current performance (all are passing well and happy with their studies), current activities (two are working part-time, selling rice for 1000r² and painting nails for 3000r), taking photos, discussion of future plans (work in a bank or for a business), and discussion of whether they want to continue getting HCP finance (all said yes). The students were aged from 19 to 22.

We had a look through one of their micro-economics textbooks. It was a photocopied text that they buy for 3500r, and is a standard university introduction to micro-economics (written in English).

We received ten new completed application forms, and had two rounds of interviews (the first on Thursday and another on Friday for students who couldn't make Thursday). Two students withdrew their applications. Several other students wanted to apply, but they had not passed high school or did not have a full application, and so were not considered. This is the first year that we strictly enforced the application process.

In total, five new students were accepted. For more details on each applicant, see Appendix C.

HCP paid for four students from the 2009 generation (\$900) and five students from the new 2010 generation (\$1250), with a total of \$2150. However, \$250 of this was paid by Kong Pov, as he owed that money to HCP from the previous year.

Battambang (BB)

HCP work in BB was done on Tuesday (15/09/09) and Wednesday (16/09/09), and included a meeting with previous students, an information session, a group interview, and a contract signing ceremony.

¹ written 10/10/09

² 4000r = US\$1

The meeting with previous students (Chamnan, Rithy, Saroum, Sidet, Sophon, Thana) included a discussion of current performance (all are passing well and happy with their studies), current activities (four are doing volunteer work, two -- Saroum, Sidet -- are working as school teachers), taking photos, discussion of future plans, and discussion of whether they want to continue getting HCP finance (all said yes). Rithy has changed his study from law to management.

It was discovered that Thana is on a \$75 scholarship, which means that HCP had over-paid his 2009 tuition fee by \$75. This money was credit to HCP.

We received ten new completed application forms. The quality of applicants in BB was higher than the quality in KC. We picked the six best candidates, but then agreed to take all of the applicants if the university could provide them all with a \$50 annual scholarship (taking the price down to \$200/year). The university agreed, and so all students were accepted.

HCP paid for three students from the 1st generation (\$700), three students from the 2nd generation (\$675), and ten students from the new 3rd generation (\$2000), with a total of \$3375. However, this was partially offset with the \$75 credit from the previous over-payment (see above).

Travel costs & other activities

Return flights from Sydney to Phnom Penh (via Singapore) were A\$880 per person. Return flights from Singapore to Phnom Penh were ~\$200. Accommodation was in cheap traveler hotels, and cost between US\$4 (cold water, no a/c) and US\$12 (warm water, a/c) per night.

Inter-city transport was by private bus, and cost between US\$4 and US\$15, with trips lasting from 3 hours to 12 hours. Intra-city transport was by moto (scooter motorbike taxis) or tuk-tuk (motorbike with a four person wagon on the back), and cost between US\$0.50 and US\$2 per trip.

To give an idea of the costs in Cambodia, a meal costs around US\$3, a beer US\$1, an hour massage US\$5, pack of cigarettes US\$0.50, a shirt US\$4, fake sunglasses US\$4, a dentist appointment US\$5, one day at Angkor Wat US\$20.

The 2008 trip was a great success, with HCP progressing well and a great time was had by all. We mixed work with play and first time visitors (Kristin & Joseph) were able to see the major tourist spots and enjoy many authentic Cambodian experiences not open to many travelers. While in Kampong Cham, we were special guests at their graduation ceremony, along with the head of the Cambodian education department and the governor of the province (Hun Leung, Hun Sen's brother), and also to the graduation party that evening.

In Kampong Cham, Phnom Penh and Battambang, UME staff and owners were always gracious in taking us out for Cambodian dinner and nightlife.

Also, while in Battambang, John was recorded for a TV advert promoting HCP and UME-BB. It is a one minute advert of just talking directly to the screen, which is planned to be shown over the next few months on local TV, and paid for by UME-BB.

Following the success of this trip, HCP will next year give more warning to supporters so that they can join in on a semi-guided tour of Cambodia for our 2010 HCP trip.

Appendix A: Opportunity for teacher coordination

For foreigners interested in teaching at a Cambodian university, UME & HCP can coordinate a short-term teaching spot.

Minimum requirement is a bachelors degree in a relevant subject, a minimum of one month, and you must pay your own flights to and from Cambodia.

Foreign teachers will be supplied with teaching materials, free accommodation and a small stipend to pay for food and transport. For more information, contact HCP.

Appendix B: Meeting format & procedures

Student meeting

- * Discussion of current performance
- * Still studying same subject? If change, why?
- * Current activities (eg part-time job)
- * Current living arrangements
- * Discussion of future plans
- * Get outstanding information (school results)
- * Discussion of HCP & do they still want finance
- * Take photos

Information sessions

- * Invite all prospective applicants (& sponsors) to an information session.
- * In KC the information session was combined with the interviews.
- * In BB we had the info session on Tue and the interviews on Wed.
- * Explain how HCP works, including payment schedule.
- * Encourage the students to pursue an alternative if possible.
- * Explain the application requirements.

Interview format

Ensure that students have all the necessary parts of the application, including front page, second page, school records, referee's report and a sponsor with them. Students without a full application should not be considered. Re-explain how HCP works.

Individual questions:

- * Age, and when did they graduate school?
- * Why they can't pay for university themselves?
- * What do their parents do for a living?
- * Where do they live? How will they get to university?
- * What did they do last year?
- * If they cannot get HCP finance, what will they do this year?
- * What do they want to study? Why? How much earn?
- * How did they hear about HCP?
- * Will they pay 10% of their income?
- * Ask the parent/sponsor what they think
- * Any question

Contract signing ceremony

- * Explain the contract, including payment schedule
- * Check if they are sure they want HCP finance
- * Sign contract (University, HCP, Student, Sponsor)
- * Four copies (one for student, one for university, two for HCP)
- * Thanks students and thank university
- * Take photos
- * Give contracts & business card to students

Appendix C: Students interviewed

UME-KC

Sokkhun -- D78. farmer family. Would have worked in a factory (\$45/month) but wants to be an accountant (\$200/month). Pays rent (\$25/month). 2nd year. D. WITHDREW.

Sotheavy -- E64. farmer. Rent room (\$15), 2nd year, Factory or building, \$150 for market research. WITHDREW.

Nith (m) -- E64. 1st year, lives 1 hour away, farmer family (cabbage & corn & peas). 1 year out of school. Wants to be a translator. ACCEPTED.

Engly (m) -- E27. 1st year, would otherwise be a builder (\$40+/month), wants to study English and wants to go into business. Grades are too low. REJECTED.

Bunnak (m) -- D86. 1st year, just finished school, wants to study management, would otherwise be a builder. 19 years old. ACCEPTED.

Raksa (m) -- D90. family is sick, finished school last year, without HCP will apply for other universities (MVU) or work on the farm, wants to work in Aclada Bank (micro-finance). Drive in (8 hours) on Thursday but came at the wrong time and then decided not to apply because couldn't afford accommodation in KC. The university offered to find free accommodation, so they came in again on Friday (another 8 hours) to apply. ACCEPTED.

Chhuon (m) -- E35. poor farmer, was in high school last year, without university will be a mechanic (\$70/month), scored 34% at school. No references. REJECTED.

Lihor (f) -- E38. poor farmer, graduated school in 2005 and has been working on the farm, started studying Agriculture in 2007 but stopped for lack of money. Scored 37.8% at school. ACCEPTED.

SoPhal (m) -- E40. poor farmers, was in high school last year, without university will be a mechanic, scored 40% at school, but didn't bring school documents. REJECTED.

Leang (f) -- E45. family are rice farmers. If no HCP, will help on the farm. Can stay with the family. Finished school in 2006 and have been farming since. Brother is a tailor. ACCEPTED.

UME-BB

Kieng Soloeth (m) & Kieng Soloun (m) -- E58 (Uni: A-85) & E89 (Uni: A-85) Brothers. Christians. Their dad earns \$80/month working at the church "Compassion of Christ". Previously went to the "Cambodian University of Speciality", but have to leave. Currently volunteer at the church. Both want to study management and then go into business in BB. They live close to the university and come by bicycle. Good university grades. ACCEPTED & ACCEPTED.

Youern Nga (m) -- E59. Family are rice farmers, live 25km away, rent of \$5/month in a share room, last year studied management at UME and came forth in his class, wants to go into business in BB and thinks he will earn \$100-\$200/month. Without HCP may have to stop study and return to the farm. Heard about HCP through university announcement. ACCEPTED.

Van Chamroeun (m) -- D87. Got a D at school and has a \$50 scholarship. No father, mum does laundry (5000r/day). Last year at school. Wants to study English and become a diplomat (can earn \$500/month).

Live 14km away, would live in the pagoda. Heard about HCP through a relative who works at the American Corner at UME-BB. ACCEPTED.

Koch Sophy (f) -- E50. Family are rice farmers, live 8km away and can bicycle into town. Last year at school. This year without HCP will get any job. Sister works on the farm. Wants to study management (IT?) and work someday as a journalist. Heard about HCP through a relative who studies at UME. Has a \$50 scholarship. ACCEPTED.

Phoun Pisith (m) -- D92. Dad is a moto driver (8000r/day), mum is sick. Borrowed a friend's shirt for the interview to look good. Last year at school, came 5th out of 50. Lives in BB and can bicycle to university. Without HCP would work in a restaurant (\$30/month). Wants to study management; work in a company/bank/factory for \$150/month. Didn't know about university scholarship. Heard about HCP from village friend who is going to UME. ACCEPTED.

Nget Vechhai (m) -- E42. Had applied last year but didn't come to interview, father died, mum has no job, rice farmers, very poor. Live 50km away, got a taxi that day for 8000r, which they had to borrow from neighbours. Would look to live in pagoda. Last two years has been rice farmer because could not afford to go to university. Without HCP would stay as a rice farmer. Brother died, old sister grows rice and is married to a handicraft man. Wants to study management to go into banking and earn over \$100/month. Heard about HCP from a friend. ACCEPTED.

Sou Chan Thin (m) -- E48. father is dead, mum is sick, very poor. Live 14km in a province, growing rice. Had to work on the farm during school. Big brother, who was a builder, will now go back to help on the farm. Last year in high school. Without HCP would be a builder. Wants to study management to work in a bank. Could live with big sister, who is married and works in BB. Can bicycle to university. Heard about from a the university librarian. ACCEPTED.

Chh Porn (m) -- E56. mum and dad dead, lives with grandmother and other relatives 46km away. Wants to study English and become an English teacher (>\$100/month) and would live with uncle. Last year at high school. Next year would look for other scholarship or work as a security guard (\$30/month). Heard about HCP from uncle (4th year student at UME). ACCEPTED.

Chay Sochea (f) -- E60. parents are old rice farmers 48km away, earning about \$10/month. Brother is rice farmer, sister at school. Last year at school (E and 60%). Without HCP next year would look after mum, who is old. Would live with siblings in BB and borrow a friend's moto. Wants to study management, wants to open a business. Heard about from cousin. ACCEPTED.