



# Carpets for Communities

EMPOWERING FAMILIES TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

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## A Child's Story: From Cart-Pusher to Student

Nine-year-old Sidaew lives in a small bamboo hut with her parents and her five siblings in Pracheathorm village, not far from the Thai border. Early this year, CfC staff found Sidaew working on the border, struggling to support her family. Since her mother joined CfC in January, Sidaew's life has been transformed. Sidaew shares her story:

"I am a first-grade student at Pracheathorm School. I have been going to school since the beginning of February. I like school very much. When I go to school, I get to meet my friends. Sometimes we draw pictures and color. I like school so much, that I haven't missed a day of class!

Before, I couldn't go to school. My family didn't have money, so I had to go to the Thai border to work. I used to be a cart-pusher in the Thai market. It was so hard for me. Sometimes



Sidaew (third from left) poses with her siblings outside of their house before their first day of class.

other carts would run over my feet and cut my legs. And, sometimes, the Thai police would chase me. When they captured me, they would beat me before they would let me go home.

Now, my mom can earn money making carpets, so I stopped working in Thailand. I just stay at home, go to school, and sometimes help my mom with the carpet. Now I am happy."

Like Sidaew, her 7-year-old twin sisters and 12-year-old brother now study in first grade. Not only do these children have more hope for the future because they are in school, but they are also safe from trafficking and other dangers associated with work on the border.

## CfC Mothers Equipped to Care for Sick Children

Imagine being a poor mother from a remote Cambodian village. Your child



Mothers learn to recognize the symptoms of malaria and dengue fever through role-playing activities.

is sick. You have no money to see a healthcare provider. Even if you did, the nearest healthcare facility is 10 km away, and the roads are impassible due to the week's heavy rains. What do you do?

This situation is not uncommon in Poi Pet. Through its "Healthcare for Mothers" training series and the distribution of medical kits, CfC is providing a means for participants to care for sick and injured children before they can be taken to a healthcare center.

All eighteen CfC mothers have participated in the first two of four training sessions held this month. With the completion of each session, mothers receive medical supplies for home-based treatment. Topics covered in the series include Diarrhea & Dehydration, Fever (Malaria & Dengue), First Aid, and Immunizations & Nutrition.

A kind donation from an American couple has made "Healthcare for Mothers" training and the distribution of medical kits possible.

## CfC Area Rugs Hit the International Market

Carpets for Communities' wool-silk combination area rugs were showcased at Carpet Maker Thailand, Co. Ltd.'s exhibit at the Bangkok International Gift and Houseware Fair in April. The fair marked the debut of CfC's area rugs on the international market.

CfC area rugs are hand-hooked with scrap material from Carpet Maker Thailand's and Inter Krai's factories in Khon Kaen, Thailand. The finished products are high-quality, one-of-a-kind pieces.



A CfC rug is displayed at the BIG/BIH Fair. This rug was proudly hand-hooked by Ngean Ouk, one of CfC's first participants and a mother of five children.



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*Carpets for Communities makes education possible for vulnerable Cambodian children by empowering their mothers with secure incomes through the production and sale of one-of-a-kind, hand-hooked carpets. Carpets for Communities is a joint-project of the Cambodian Hope Organization (CHO) and the Millennium World Peace Foundation (MWPF). Both are not-for-profit organizations.*

## Seeking a Web-Developer

CfC is seeking a volunteer to revamp and maintain our website. Interested? Email us!

## Happy New Year

For three days in mid-April, Cambodia celebrated the biggest holiday of the year, Khmer New Year. Businesses closed, students went on vacation, and people returned to their homelands to celebrate with their families.

The new year is traditionally spent by playing Khmer games, dancing in circles, and performing ceremonies at the Buddhist temples.

Among the temple ceremonies is Pithi Srang Preah, which involves sprinkling water over Buddha statues, monks and elders to wash away bad luck. In recent years, young people have transformed this custom, taking buckets of water to the street for countrywide water fights.



Children spray water at a passing motorbike. Throwing water and powder in the streets have become popular Khmer new year activities.

## Child Labor in Rong Klua's Fish Market

Thousands of Cambodians flock across the Poi Pet border crossing to work in Talad Rong Klua, Thailand's massive border market. The better-off ones are shop sellers, but the majority work as day laborers. Among them are some of Cambodia's most vulnerable children.

The fish market, nestled in a back corner of Rong Klua, is a popular workplace among children. Fish from Cambodia's Tonle Sap lake are delivered here by the truckload. Laborers scale the fish, scrubbing them with

metal brushes, and prepare them for distribution within Thailand. Next to the fish



A 5-year-old boy scales fish in Rong Klua. He and his grandmother work here everyday.

processing area, similar preparations are underway for frogs and insects.

The stench is unbearable, and the work conditions are as unhygienic as they get. Yet, with few other options for employment, Cambodian laborers return day after day.

A day of work can pay as much as 60 Thai baht (US\$1.50), but it's just as common to go home empty-handed.

Before joining CfC, several participants' children were scaling fish in Rong Klua.

## Meetings Facilitate CfC Community

Over 60% of Poi Pet residents are economic migrants who have come from all different parts of Cambodia. Work opportunities are limited and unstable. And, in many cases, people do not own the land on which they live. All of these factors contribute to Poi Pet's transience, where people are constantly coming and going. In such an environment, a sense of community is hard to come by.

Regular CfC gatherings are helping to establish a sense of community among program participants. The meetings provide a forum for women to exchange

ideas, share hand-hooking techniques, and resolve production issues. Decisions made in the meetings have prompted changes in carpet raw materials and have sparked new program ini-

tiatives, such as the "Healthcare for Mothers" training series. Facilitated by CfC staff, these meetings are an initial step toward establishing a self-help group.



CfC staff, participants, and some of their children pose for the camera following a meeting in Pracheathorm village.