

Dear friends,

Rainy season has arrived to Phnom Penh and temperatures are becoming tolerable again. May has been a very busy day for our staff, as we are getting more involved in reintegration projects with other NGOs, are working on new schedules for our entrepreneurial activities (more on that later) and have been working on improvements in our building and of our programs. In this edition we'd like to share the story of Sopheap, introduce our T-shirts based on the children's own drawings, the reason the children had to take and other short stories. Enjoy!



Yasmin, Samphorn and Sengly trying out our first designs for T-shirts... We know, the size was a bit too big for this tryout. We will give them Extra Small T-shirts soon! :-)

See below for more on that!

#### The story of... Sopheap

Every month we want to share the story of one of Aziza's Place's children. We share the good and the bad, so you know who we are supporting and what challenges lie ahead of us and their families.

Sopheap joined Aziza's Place in August 2014 at the age of 7. She lives with her parents, 3 siblings, her grandmother, and her uncle in 2 small, adjacent, wooden houses. Both her parents work on the dumpsites collecting plastics. Her mother makes an extra income by sewing large bags which are used by other plastic collectors doing their rounds. Sopheap had numerous difficulties before joining Aziza's Place. She started going to school through joining an organisation that provides free education. Soon after her parents started receiving phone calls from the organisation, describing Sopheap as an 'aggressive and revolting child, ill-behaved in class and disturbing to the other students.'



It was around this time our Director of Programs Socheat got in contact with her parents. Socheat did an assessment, looking into mental and physical factors at play, and the family history to find the root cause of Sopheap's behavioural issues. However, when talking with her, he was surprised to hear what she had to say. She indicated it was very hard for her to write and, as a result, she got seated at the back of the classroom, receiving regular punishments (often physical). After a while the teacher even started to tie her to the chair (!) so she wouldn't be able to disturb others. Socheat began to suspect that there might be nothing severely wrong with Sopheap, and that her mistreatment had led to her acting out. So, he asked her parents to let her join Aziza's Place.

At the beginning it wasn't easy for us as she didn't want to play with the other children and didn't want to write in class. At times when she did copy from whiteboard in class, she never managed to write everything down completely and often wrote in a form of mirror-writing, writing everything upside down or backwards. This is not uncommon among young children, but needs correction if it persists.

To work on this, we took Sopheap to CCAMH, experts in working with children with challenges such as autism, abnormal low IQ, learning problems, etc. For 6 months Sopheap was taught to cope with her mirror writing through special methods and we received training as well. This improved her skills significantly and today she is capable (although a bit slower than others) to write normally.

She is more likely to be a slow learner, we invest more time and encourage her more to keep learning and improving. We work closely with the teachers and monitor her development in class.

Today she is a playful child, who gets along well with the other children. She has an assertive character and enjoys innocently teasing her peers and even our staff. It is troubling how situations for some children in Cambodia can develop so unpleasantly if there is no one around with proper training and expertise. We are proud Socheat was there to help her out.

#### AP at Grant Thornton

We had the honour of participating in Grant Thornton's (GT) yearly global management event, which took place in Phnom Penh. We thank Global Fund for Children (GFC), who have been supporting us for many years, for arranging this opportunity for us. We were happy to meet managers passionate about social projects worldwide and were able to introduce them all to Aziza's Place. This event was also the debut of our brand new T-shirts, designed using our children's art!



#### Aziza's Place T-shirts

Check out our children's artwork on these beautiful T-shirts! They did all the drawing and Khmer writing! (we just traced both, cleaned them up, and added a little colour).

We currently have 3 designs: a dragon (original by Reachay), butterflies (original by Samphorn) and little ducks (original by Sengly). On the back we put our logo and with every T-shirt comes a nice label explaining how the designs came about, and a little about AP.

Our goal is to use these T-shirts on events to generate a bit more income for Aziza's Place, explore the option of selling them online and to share our designs with anyone who wants to sell them during a fundraiser.



We want to have your say soon because we want to add 3 new designs to our line and we want you to tell us which ones you like (literally). So, we're going to post pictures of the new designs on our Facebook page in the next week and put it to the vote - Hope we get your feedback.

Thank you for reading our stories and supporting us along our kids' and our NGO's journey! See you next month!

#### New sign

Over the past month we've been working on a street sign for Aziza's Place. We made it out of recycled materials and gave it a bright, colourful design. From now on visitors won't have problems finding us! :-)

#### Accountancy support

Sean is delighted to be joining us for a 5-week assignment, organised through AIC. He has spent the past 4 years working in the auditing profession in the UK, and has experience in a wide range of industries, as well as specialising in the charity and not-for-profit sector. He is currently taking a break, travelling through Asia, and will arrive at AP on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June. Sean will work on our financial processes and reporting systems. Welcome Sean!



#### Staff dinner

Once per year, all the staff and teachers come together for a wonderful dinner, followed by drinks. We had an amazing time together, what a great team we have!



#### Volunteering Opportunity!

Today our children get 2 to 3 hours of English every week. Although we see progress, we want to increase our efforts and specifically put more focus on learning while playing.

Know someone interested in joining us for at least 3 months? Let us know!



#### AP Exams

Last Tuesday (20th of May) our younger children had the pleasure of participating in the quarterly exams at Aziza's Place. We want to track their progress, so testing them is a necessary evil. Or at least, evil in their eyes. :-)

The test included Khmer writing, Khmer reading and math. Combining the results with their school results, we get a complete picture of their strengths and weaknesses, and know what to focus on for the next months.

The results will also form a baseline for future exams, to track the children's progress and to evaluate our own teachers' efforts.