

# FAAC NEWSLETTER



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FULBRIGHT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF CAMBODIA (FAAC)

## After Siem Reap—Lecture Series in Preah Sihanouk Province

By **Chan Virak**, MA in TESOL,  
San Jose State University (2008)



FAAC presenters and participants

Continuing our commitment to promote educational exchange and academic counseling, the Fulbright Alumni Association of Cambodia (FAAC) delivered a workshop on study skills at Build Bright University (BBU), Preah Sihanouk Province, on 28<sup>th</sup> March.

The workshop comprised four distinct presentations by four

Fulbright returnees who are experts in education and language teaching: 'Study Skills' by Mr. Om Soryong (MSc in Instructional Design), 'Importance of Reading' by Mr. Chan Sophal (MEd in Educational Psychology), 'How to Become a Good Listener' by Mr. Chau Samphas (MA in TESOL), and 'Socio-cognitive Strategies in Language Learning' by Mr. Chan Virak (MA in TESOL). The presentations were conducted using both Khmer and English to accommodate the different levels of the participants' English proficiency, and this was well received by the participating students. The session concluded with a lot of questions from the participants and informal and friendly chats between the presenters and the partici-

pants. The three-hour-long workshop attracted a number of students from different fields of study including English language teaching, tourism and business administration.

This workshop is part of the FAAC's Lecture Series Program for the purpose of allowing the Fulbright returnees to share their knowledge and experience with university students. Similar workshops have already been conducted at various educational institutions both in Phnom Penh and provinces in Cambodia, and will continue to allow for such exchange with the younger generation of Cambodia and ultimately for promoting a community of sharing and learning.

## FAAC with US Embassy Reaching Out

By **Mr. Chau Samphas**, MA in TESOL, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2006)

FAAC members actively took part in the Information Sessions on Educational Exchange Programs to the United States, organized by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy, in higher educational institutions across the country: Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampong Cham, and Preah Sihanouk Province, earlier this year in February and March.

The sessions' main objective

was to provide the participants, especially those with aspiration for future academic advancement, with detailed information related to the Fulbright Student Fellowships, the Hubert Humphrey Fellowships, the Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program, the Global Undergraduate Exchange Program, the Undergraduate Intensive English Study Program, and the Study of the United States Institutes for Student Leaders Program.

My experience during an information session in Kampong

Cham on 29 February 2009 was overly exciting! There were lots of feedbacks and questions from the audience; and we never felt we had enough time to provide answers, comments and advice.



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### About Fulbright and FAAC:

- More than 100 Cambodians have by now been granted the Fulbright Scholarship to pursue graduate degrees in various fields of their expertise.
- FAAC now has more than 80 members working and contributing to Cambodia's development in their own field of expertise.

## ASPIRATIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

To showcase the contributions our alumni have made to our nation, we are creating profile articles of our alumni. The first of this multiple-part series begins with Pol. Maj. Gen. Meach Sophana.



**Police Major General Meach Sophana**, Fulbright Alumnus, MA in Journalism and Mass Communication, New York University, 1996.

#### Currently:

- Deputy Director of Central Security Department, Ministry of Interior
- Deputy Chief of the Secretariat of the National Commission for Counter Terrorism
- Adviser to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior
- Ph.D. Candidate, University of Sydney, sponsored by Australian Leadership Award

**“Nothing is impossible as long as we’re all given a fair opportunity, in a proper place and at a proper time.”**

*Nina and Ratha are currently undergraduate students at the Royal University of Phnom Penh and working as FAAC volunteers.*

**By Thon Sonina & Teng Chankaruk Ratha**, Department of Media and Communication

Pol. Maj. Gen. Meach Sophana, 43, Deputy Director of Center for Security Department, Ministry of Interior, was among the first generation of Cambodian scholars to be granted a Fulbright Scholarship for graduate study in the US, in 1994, after the period of wars and instability in Cambodia. Back then, being able to achieve such an opportunity was an arduous thing to do since the English language was still limited: not enough learning materials and lack of guidance and experience, as compared to the present. However, Mr. Meach Sophana proved to be one of Cambodia’s outstanding candidates, considering his high level of education and work experience. This pushed him through to pursue his Master’s Degree in the field of Journalism and Mass Communication.

“I’ve learned a lot during my two years of study in the US. Because at that time I had been living in a closed society for so long, it was a big challenge for me to open myself to the world for the first time. So the first

thing that I learned was how to survive and live in a society that was so different from ours. To me it is also knowledge,” he said.

It was not easy for him to achieve his goal, but once he successfully completed his course in journalism and mass communication within only one year and a half, Mr. Meach Sophana managed to finish another course in the field of Public Administration. Right after he received his M.A., he returned to Cambodia and started working for the National Police, and he later became Deputy Director of the Department of Immigration, dealing with immigration law and communicating with foreigners and informing them of the immigration rules, regulations and the like.

“As a deputy director of the Immigration Department I have contributed a lot to the country’s development because immigration serves many purposes in the government. It serves security purposes; it serves the role of helping to protect the border security, promoting the country’s image and in the future I’m hoping to be a part of the improvement of our country’s economy as well as of our living stan-

dard,” he said.

If the Immigration Department performs well, there will be trust for Cambodians as well as the country’s reputation as a whole, he added.

For him and his family, education always comes first. But that is not all. Another ambition for Mr. Meach Sophana is for Cambodia to have a place in the world, where everyone knows and recognizes. In order to do that, as a Cambodian, one has to prove to other nations that he or she is intelligent and outstanding and that nothing is impossible. With such an instauration he has served the community and Cambodia and contributed immensely to its development.

His children are next to him, the living proof of his words. They have taken up challenges and been able to study in top universities including West Point (USA) and the Australian Defense Force Academy (ADFA).

“Nothing is impossible as long as we’re all given a fair opportunity, in a proper place and at a proper time,” said Mr. Meach Sophana.

#### Words of Advice from Pol. Maj. Gen. Meach Sophana

- You have to have a passion and determination.
- You must get an education that can change your life, your perspective and vision about the world.
- You must put all your efforts when applying for a scholarship. Improve your English and do your best to improve your grades.
- You must be well-prepared and have an excellent idea on why you are applying for the scholarship before your interview.
- You have to tell the interviewers that you believe in education, you want to change your life, you want to change your living standard, you want to help develop your country, and you want to help the people, your friends and family.
- You must admit the fact that before you can help others, you need to help yourselves first, because this is the nature of a human.
- Keep applying. This year you may be rejected, but next year you might be accepted.

## Cambodia and Its Environmental Dilemma

*By Oum Pisey, MSc in Forest Resource Management, State University of New York (1999)*

Although the situation of environment in Cambodia especially climate change is not as serious as that in developed countries, we will face many consequences from global warming, triggering the rise of sea level along the coastline, flood, and drought including irregular rainy and dry seasons. Coastal communities might face a lot of problems such as shrinking land for farming, salt production and settlement. Water-born diseases such as malaria, typhoid fever and dengue fever as well as allergy from sunlight could in-

crease in figures if there are no measures taken to address them.

To deal with this, the Ministry of Environment and other ministries, together with donors, have directed most funding to clean development mechanism activities, national adaptation activities, reduced emission from deforestation and degradation, etc., in order to capture Green House Gases from emitting into the atmosphere. There is tradeoff in this environment. A rich country can buy a carbon credit from Cambodia since it has discharged large amount of GHGs into the atmosphere. What Cambodia would

get is forest plantation, watershed protection to replace degraded lands. However, vis-à-vis to combating climate change, for Cambodia it is still a voluntary basis because the country is not an industrial country, which emits tons of carbons (CO<sub>2</sub> and CO) into the atmosphere although Cambodia ratified UN Convention on Climate Change in 1995 and acceded to the Kyoto Protocol in 2002. Cambodia may not impose tough regulations on combating climate change activities because of the concern that it would scare investors away from its young industry, which I think is arguable.



*Mr. Oum Pisey is now a Technical Adviser for the Ministry of Environment and Project Manager for UNEP/GEF. He also holds a degree in Public Policy from Singapore and is now a PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of Cambodia.*

## Where Can You Get Information for Further Study?

*By Bounchan Sumana, MSc in Educational Administration, Texas A&M University (2007)*

Khem Noeun is a fresh graduate from a law school and wants to continue her study abroad; however, Noeun has no idea where to get scholarship information.

How do you obtain scholarship information to study abroad, particularly to study in the U.S.? Here are some good places to start with:

**People you know:** Talk to your parents, relatives, friends, neighbors, and even your acquaintances (the people that you build network with). Sometimes people you know are the best sources of information about scholarship openings. They may know about certain an-

nouncements where they work and study.

**Your school:** Your school may have a bulletin board – an information board on which many flyers are posted. Building a habit of reading the bulletin board is a good way to keep your eyes and ears open to any news. Also talk to your teachers about what kind of scholarship you would like to get.

**Press:** Announcements in newspapers can also be useful. You can find out quickly if there is any scholarship suitable for you. You can also get an idea of where to go in order to get more information.

**Websites:** A number of websites are useful, such as [www.bongthom.com](http://www.bongthom.com) and <http://cambodiajobs.blogspot.com>.

### **Educational Advising Center in Cambodia**

**(EACC):** Supported by the US Department of State, US Embassy and the Maryknoll society, EACC provides students with information related to scholarships to study in the United States

plus other countries as well as on how to apply. The center provides the services free of charge. You can contact the center in person, by calling or through e-mail. Detailed information is as follows:

Educational Advising Center in Cambodia  
Room 103, first floor main building  
(Building A or Faculty of Science building)  
Royal University of Phnom Penh  
Tell: 023 884320, 011 850121, or 017 890434  
E-mail: [caradvchthon@online.com.kh](mailto:caradvchthon@online.com.kh)  
Website: [www.eacc-edu-kh.com](http://www.eacc-edu-kh.com)

*Ms. Bounchan Sumana is an advisor at the Educational Advising Center in Cambodia, and she has just received the Australian Leadership Awards for PhD study in Higher Education Administration at the University of Newcastle, Australia.*

**VISION: To Foster Peace and Development in Cambodia through the Promotion of Access to Quality Education and Cross-cultural Understanding**

## FULBRIGHT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF CAMBODIA

To all alumni: want to contribute an article? Please send one to [camfulbrighters@gmail.com](mailto:camfulbrighters@gmail.com)



### OUR NEW OFFICE:

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**Clockwise from top-right:** (1) FAAC president attended the inaugural meeting of the British Chevening Alumni Association of Cambodia.



(2) FAAC members interviewed a candidate for the volunteer position at the Department of Media and Communication.



(3) Fulbright alumnus Kim Sedera conducted a lecture on research methods, as part of the Fulbright lecture series, at the Institute of Foreign Languages.



(4) FAAC members and volunteers posed after a working lunch.



### CURRENT FAAC COMMITTEE:

**President:** Mr. Theam Rottanak  
**Vice-president:** Mr. Peou Chivoin  
**Treasurer:** Mr. Om Soryong  
**Secretary General:** Ms. Thon Vimealea

## RECRUITMENT OF FAAC VOLUNTEERS

*By Thon Vimealea, MA in Development Economics, Williams College (2006)*

To fulfil its missions, FAAC has recruited volunteers to assist in its various activities, and most important of all, to promote the spirit of volunteerism among Cambodian students and to be able to more widely share knowledge and experience both on the Fulbright program and of the expertise among Fulbright returnees to Cambodian students. The selection criteria include academic ability and background, time availability, prospective commitment, English proficiency, personality and ability to work in a team. After weighing FAAC's needs with the candidates' current study needs, FAAC decided to recruit nine volunteers:

1. Ms. Chea Socheata, Institute of Foreign Languages
2. Ms. Duong Seylene, Institute of Foreign Languages
3. Mr. Leang Sovannarith, Institute of Foreign Languages
4. Mr. Ros Ratana, Royal University of Law and Economics & Panhasastra University of Cambodia
5. Ms. Seng Chandaly, Institute of Foreign Languages
6. Mr. Sor Bunthorng, University of Puthisastra
7. Mr. Sok Sovanchandara, Institute of Foreign Languages
8. Mr. Teng Chan Karuk Ratha, Department of Media and Communication
9. Ms. Thon Sonina, Department of Media and Communication

The volunteers are expected to help FAAC coordinate and arrange upcoming and on-going events such as lecture series, workshops, retreat, and produce its newsletters and brochure. They will also sit in the FAAC office, which serves a variety of purposes including providing information for students wishing to learn more about FAAC and the Fulbright program.

Certificates and/or letters of recommendation will be provided to those who meet satisfactory work performance after serving FAAC for at least six months, but more important than that, it is hoped that in return for their services, the students will be better equipped with upgraded professionalism and relevant work and experiences for their future endeavours.