

FAAC NEWSLETTER

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FULBRIGHT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF CAMBODIA (FAAC)

FAAC Office at University of Puthisastra
FAAC Room, Ground Floor Building A
Street 180 & 184, Boeng Rang, Doun Penh,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

FAAC Office at the Institute of Foreign Languages
FAAC Room, Ground Floor Building E
IFL (RUPP), Russian Federation Boulevard
P.O. Box 416, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

FAAC participates in the U.S. International Education Week

By **Ms. Thon Sonina** and **Mr. Seap Ousphea**, Department of Media and Communication (DMC), FAAC Volunteers

The Fulbright Alumni Association of Cambodia (FAAC) with the support of the US Embassy reached out to students across campuses in Phnom Penh in celebration of the International Education Week, held from November 17th to 20th. Fulbright alumni and representatives of the US Embassy in Phnom Penh were joined by faculty members and about 1,000 students from five universities in this year's celebration.

The group presented topics of

various issues, ranging from the looming establishment of the Cambodian stock market and the Cambodian economy to scholarship programs and tips about learning and improving English. Several former Fulbright scholars talked about their social and academic experiences in the US, which inspired students to ask good questions.

The five participating institutions are the Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Law and Economics, National University of Management,



Mr. Chau Sa giving a presentation to students at RULE

Western University, and University of Puthisastra.

Fulbright and SUSI Alumni inspire children at orphanage center

By **Mr. LEANG Sovannarith**, IFL student & **Mr. Seap Ousphea**, DMC student, FAAC volunteers

Fulbright and SUSI Alumni visited an orphanage center, The New



Mr. Chou Huot talked to the children at the New Day Cambodia Orphanage center

Day Cambodia, in Stung Meanchey district on November

14 to encourage them to study and give them tips about academic success.

One Fulbright and two SUSI alums, a representative of the US Embassy, and four FAAC volunteers had a chance to talk with about a hundred children living in the orphanage center. The children voiced concerns about their future and asked for guidance from the alums.

Most of the children are young orphans, aged from 12 to 18. A 13-year-old boy asked, "What are you doing to contribute to the development of our country after you finished your studies in the United States?" Generally, you can expect some of these questions from a college student, but probably not

from a 13-year-old boy living in a slum area.

The session was concluded with fruitful results. The children were inspired and requested the alums to visit them frequently or if possible, once a month.

These children represent one of the marginalized communities in the capital. Most of them live on mountains of trash. They search for items like bottles from inside of the trash mountains for sale to support their families and buy study materials.

The New Day Cambodia plays an important role for this community. It provides accommodation, food, health care and education, especially English training.

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About Fulbright and FAAC:

- FAAC is planning consultative lectures on university major selection in high schools throughout Cambodia.
- More than 100 Cambodians have by now been granted the Fulbright Scholarship to pursue graduate degrees in the USA. Most of them with various fields of expertise are now back in Cambodia serving in many different government agencies, public and private institutions.

ASPIRATIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

To showcase the contributions the FAAC alumni have made to our nation, we are creating a series of profiles of our alumni. In this edition, we feature H.E. Keo Rottanak.

By Ms. Thon Sonina and Mr. Seap Ousphea, Department of Media and Communication (DMC), FAAC Volunteers

“FULBRIGHT HAS A HUGE IMPACT ON MY LIFE IN MANY WAYS—ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL.”

H.E. Keo Rottanak, Fulbright scholar, Master of Higher Education Administration, Columbia University (1997)

Having served the Royal Government of Cambodia for almost ten years, H.E. Keo Rottanak, once a Fulbright scholar, expresses his views about the Fulbright program.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

- **1994:** BA in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, Royal University of Phnom Penh
- **1997:** MA, Higher Education Administration, Columbia University, Fulbright Scholarship
- **1999:** MA, International Development, International University of Japan, Monbusho Scholarship
- **2003:** Advanced Executive Program under the Greater Mekong Sub-region, Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management, Asian Institute of Management (Training conducted in Phnom Penh)
- **2006:** Advanced Executive Education on Managing Political and Economic Change, Harvard University-John F. Kennedy School of Government
- **2006-present:** Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia
- **2008-present:** RGC Delegate in charge of Managing Electricite Du Cambodge (EDC)

Why did you apply for a Fulbright scholarship?

In 1994, scholarship grants were very limited, offered by just a few programs. Many graduates had to compete fiercely. I myself applied to three programs: one to Thailand, one to Australia, and the Fulbright. But Fulbright was my top priority because of the fame of this program and because of my personal desire to study in the US.

What did you find difficult as a Fulbright scholar?

For me, at that time, there were three biggest challenges. First was English proficiency although I had spent four years studying English at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Secondly, the difference in education systems was also a challenge. I think it requires more critical thinking and analytical skills in American than in Cambodian education system. I think it's still a problem even today. But it was more difficult during my time than today. In 1994, I didn't have a dictionary at home, and I had to stand in line to use a library dictionary. Now you can find one everywhere—at home, on the Internet and in your mobile phone. The third challenge was cultural adjustment. I knew I would face culture shock and had to adjust because I had never been to the US. Neither had I studied abroad before, so cultural adjustment was a huge challenge for me.

What did you do to succeed in your graduate program in the US?

As I'd expected, I had to spend time on improving my English writing skills in order to write good academic papers. I had to learn to deal with different people and cultures in the US. It was not an easy ride because there were full of challenges along the way. It requires you be a fast learner to take advantage of the huge amount of resources available such as the library. After the first semester at Columbia University, I felt comfortable with the system. The hard work and the open-mindedness was finally paid off.

What did you gain from the US?

I earned a Master of Arts in Higher



H.E. Keo Rottanak, former Fulbright Scholar 1995-1997

Education Administration from one of the top universities in the world. The program prepared me to be a faculty administrator or a university rector. Basically, it was a program that prepares people to be policy makers in higher education. Also, I was able to attend a training course with an NGO called Metro International. The NGO offered a one-year part-time program for students in leadership skills. That was when I had a chance to learn more about leadership. Although I made good use of my study time, I didn't make good use of the time to travel. So, I miss that part.

What difference would it make without Fulbright?

If I hadn't been given a chance with the Fulbright program, I wouldn't have what I have today, especially the career I'm having. To me, Fulbright has a huge impact on my life in many ways—academic, social, and professional. The knowledge and experiences I gained from the United States was a turning point in my life when it comes to subsequent trainings in Japan and in other countries. I believe if I was not granted the scholarship or if I had opted for a different scholarship program, I would not have the same preparation for my life like what I'm having right now.

As the first president of FAAC, what advice do you have for your predecessors?

Doing volunteer work for any organization including the Fulbright needs passion, so the key for any leader including the FAAC president is to energize its members to have passion.”

Maternal health in Cambodia desperately needs our attention

By **Mr. Khim Keovathanak**, PhD student at the University of Melbourne (under Australian Leadership Award Scholarship)

Cambodian women remain vulnerable to health-related issues, one of which is death from delivering a baby. Despite a gradual improvement in health care system, Cambodia has the highest maternal mortality rate in the region—472 per 100,000 live births. This means one mother dies for every 200 deliveries.

Reducing maternal mortality is one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which Cambodia is committed. However, for almost two decades of hard work, this problem seems unrelenting. The results of both Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) 2000 and 2005 suggest the stubbornness and complexity of the problem.

The maternal mortality is a reflection of the conditions of healthcare system and health service delivery in the country. Among major factors behind the problem are the issues of human resources and infrastructure.

It's common knowledge that Cambodia is seriously in need of human resources for all development sectors. After three decades of war and destruction, rebuilding human capital, particularly in health sector is critically important for the well-being of the people. Thirty years of nation



Mr. Khim Keovathanak, former Fulbright Scholar 1999-2001

rebuilding has produced trained midwives, nurses and doctors, numbering in thousands. Currently, Cambodia has about 18,000 health workers for the 14 million people. While studies have suggested that these resources are adequate in terms of ratio of population to trained medical professionals, the problem is not simply that. The problem has become more about distribution of these trained medical professionals to places where they are best utilized to respond to the needs of the population.

It is obvious that health professionals concentrate only in urban areas where they can work in both public and private sectors. About half of the health workers hold dual jobs in urban areas, while many of the rural poor are still lacking basic healthcare. In big cities, opportunities are likely to present for medical professionals. There are generally more clients who are wealthier for their

medical services. In addition, people need convenience. In urban areas, families of these health professionals can access better social services, i.e. they can live in a better environment, have better education for their children, and have better access to clean water, electricity, and health care.

Housing, living expenses and compensations are the basic essential factors in medical staff's decision to station in rural areas. As long as there are no effective policy interventions and strategies to address these issues, Cambodia will continue to see shortages of healthcare staff and facilities in rural areas.

Health infrastructure has been insufficient to respond to the needs of the growing population. There is an increasing demand for jobs in the health sector while health centers and referral hospitals have been built and put into operation. However, these medical facilities are not being utilized efficiently due to a lack of medical personnel and advanced medical equipment.

The political clout of MDGs and the persistence of the problems demand more effective and concerted efforts from the government, particularly in the mobilization and management of resources for this very purpose. Time is running out, and people need to see actions, not only to achieve the MDGs, but also to save lives of women who deserve our attention more than ever before.

Why volunteer?

By **Mr. Sok Sovanchandara**, IFL graduate (2009), FAAC Volunteer

Why should we volunteer? The dictionary definition for volunteer is 'to offer to do something without being forced or without getting paid for it.' Rarely do people work without pay, but here are a couple of reasons why we should volunteer.

First, voluntary work puts you into different fields of work environment. You can volunteer in a school, non-governmental organization, or in an association of your interest. You should be proud to volunteer because no matter what work you're

doing, you're contributing to the development of your community and your country. As for me, I am particularly interested in education sector, thereby becoming a volunteer for the Fulbright Alumni Association of Cambodia, where I can contribute to the increased awareness of students wishing to study abroad via academic counseling and disseminating successful study skills and scholarship information.

Voluntary work will give you opportunities to learn and develop your skills and career path. You will, for example, improve your communica-

tion skills along the way as you will work with other colleagues, especially those scholars with more knowledge and experience than you. You can expect to improve your teamwork, time management, and creativity as you maintain positive attitude toward learning.

I observe that many people with volunteer experiences are mostly successful in their career. Those working without pay are happier, and as a result, turn up for work more and work longer hours, and enjoy every aspect of their productive life. And this happiness is the secret to success. What about you?

Vision: Fostering peace, development and reconstruction in Cambodia through the promotion of access to quality education and cross-cultural understanding



Editors

Theam Rottanak
Peou Chivoim
Om Soryong
Seang Soleak

Designers

Peou Chivoim
Seap Ouspha

The U.S. Embassy

is the main supporter of the FAAC and its activities.



PhD Candidate Attends ILO-IFC Initiative, Geneva

Nimmith Men, a PhD candidate at Melbourne Law School, has been invited to join the Better Work Advisory Committee, a joint initiative of the International Labor Organization and the International Finance Corporation. The ILO-IFC initiative is aimed at helping to raise labor standards in order to improve the lives of over a million workers in developing countries. In response to the invitation, Nimmith has offered his assistance and will be participating in meetings of the Committee in Geneva. The first meeting was held in October 2009.

Nimmith is writing a doctoral dissertation titled "The Development of Alternative Dispute Resolution in the Cambodian Civil Justice System. His doctoral program is administered with the assistance of an AusAID 'Australian Leadership Award' (ALA) scholarship. The ALA scholarships are prestigious awards offered each year to high achievers from the Asia-Pacific region to undertake postgraduate study and a Leadership Development Program in Australia.

Prior to his doctoral program in Australia, Nimmith earned a Master's Degree in Law, Policy and Society from North-eastern University in 2003 on a Fulbright grant. He was Executive Director and Arbitrator/Conciliator at the Arbitration Council Foundation in Phnom Penh. Nimmith also served as President of the Fulbright Alumni Association of Cambodia from 2007-2009.



FAAC Alumni and representatives of the US Embassy meet with students at the National University of Management in celebration of the U.S. International Education Week, November 18, 2009

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2010-2011 FULBRIGHT GRANTEES!

We would like to express our congratulations to the following individuals upon their successful applications for the 2010-2011 Fulbright Student Fellowship:

| Name | Field of study |
|---------------------|---|
| Mr. NGUON Pheakkdey | Climate Change and Forest, PhD |
| Ms. KIV Sodana | Petroleum Geosciences, Master's |
| Ms. VINH Dany | Sustainable/Economic Development, Master's |
| Mr. BOREI Silyvann | Communication & Development Studies, Master's |
| Mr. SIM Siden | TESOL, Master's |
| Mr. OUK Thanin | MBA in Finance, Master's |
| Ms. PHON Putthavika | Computer Science, Master's |
| Mr. Pak Dolar | Bioengineering and Microbiology, Master's |

=> The Fulbright Lecture Series program provides a great chance for university students to meet face-to-face with a Fulbright Scholar who can inspire them with educational exchange experiences.

=> Contact FAAC to arrange a free Fulbright lecture or presentation by one or more of our alumni at your university or institution.

We are recruiting more volunteers to help support our activities. Outstanding students from high schools and universities are encouraged to apply. Please send us an email at camfulbrighters@gmail.com for more information. **Deadline for application: February 18, 2010 at 17:00.**

Contact us:

Tel: (855) 13 757 443 / (855) 98 620 592; E-mail: camfulbrighters@gmail.com
Websites: cambodiafulbrighters.org / cambodia.usembassy.gov/faac.html