

OCKENDEN AND CAMBODIANS

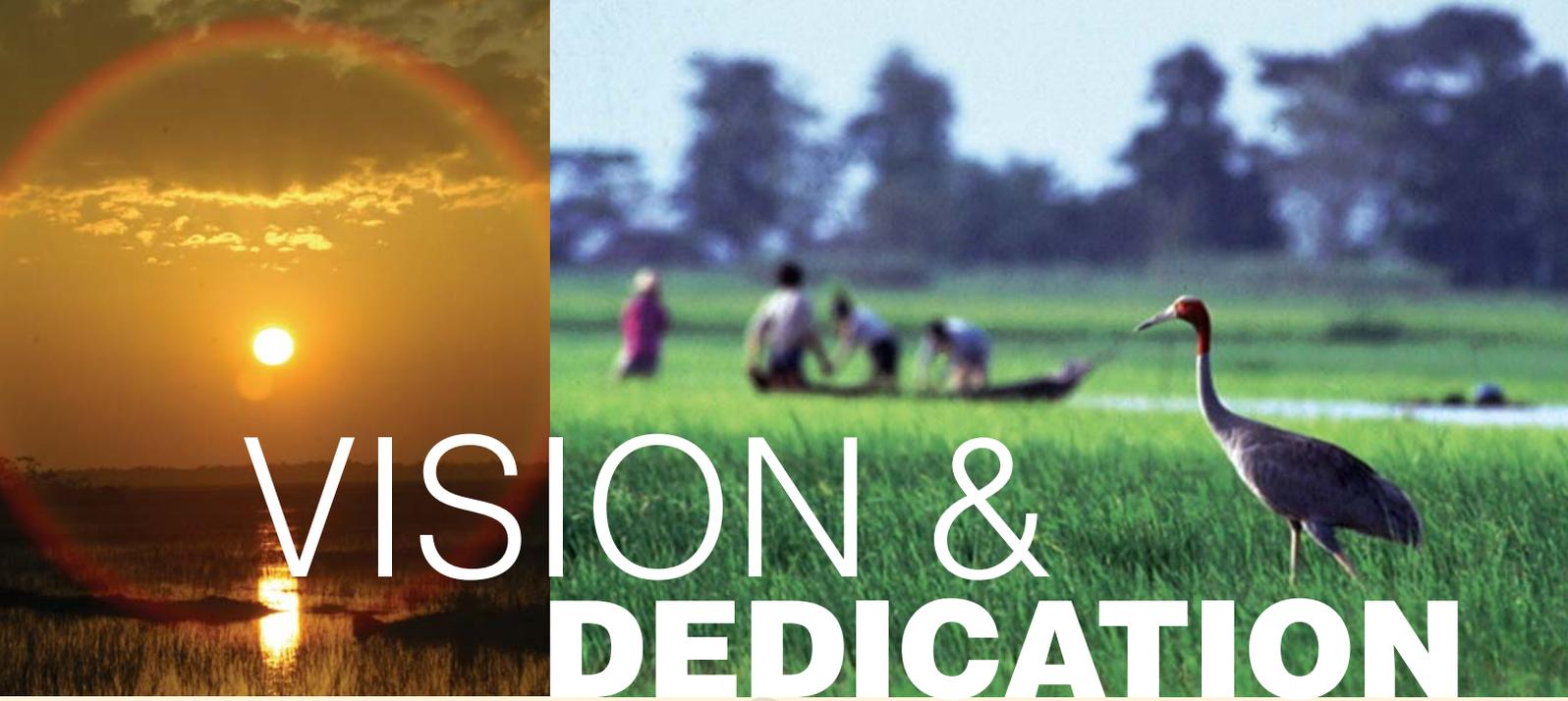
WHEN THE ORDINARY IS EXTRA-ORDINARY!



OCKENDEN
INTERNATIONAL



These scenes were captured in Kong Kleng, a new community of former refugees and displaced people, including former fighting adversaries. It was a just an ordinary day – such a one that not long ago all of them could only dream about. Now everyday activities of growing rice, catching fish, and simple leisure are proof of the peace, social integration, and improved livelihoods of Cambodians in 2007. The scenes took place alongside a new road funded by Ockenden’s donor and partners, Sir Michael and Lady Kadoorie and the Kadoorie Charitable Foundation.



VISION & DEDICATION

The life of a refugee is far from ordinary. It does not matter where in the world they have been forced to abandon home, or for whatever reason, whether conflict or natural disaster, their situation becomes extra-ordinary. Their very survival is often at great risk. Invariably they all share just one simple ambition - to return to a normal secure and healthy **ordinary** life as soon as possible. Many have extra-ordinary stories to tell, about their predicament, how they managed to live through various crises, and how they overcame adversity. This booklet can only tell a few of the many stories, and while some have gone from dire straits to riches and fame, the ones chosen here are of ordinary people. They are typical Ockenden beneficiaries, folk with modest hopes and aspirations. 23,537 Cambodian families in all were served between 1999 and 2007.

Ockenden International's part in these stories is also told, with its unique record of working with refugees and displaced people, i.e., those also forced to leave home but not across national borders – and its pioneering methodology of partnership-working, now widely adopted by other development organisations. It sets out how the organization has worked with Cambodian refugees from near the beginning of their crisis, through their struggles and on to rebuilding lives in today's relative calm prevailing in the country. The culminating point, for Ockenden International, was indicated in November 2006 when in accordance with its mission, it was the beneficiaries at their annual conference that declared "mission accomplished". The unanimous vote that day paved the way for Ockenden

International to depart from Cambodia but it did not mark the end of its work. Instead they resolved to create an independent local successor organization. The handover and transition to "Ockenden-Cambodia" was completed by 30 September 2007. Ockenden International Trustees, Management and Staff of many years can take pride and satisfaction in a job well done, in leaving behind a fine legacy, and a new civil society organisation with the facilities, means and commitment to carry on the good work.

In total Ockenden International, in serving those 23,537 beneficiary families worked with 16 direct partner NGOs or CBOs (plus other local groups via those partners) and promoted 20 different livelihood or infrastructure improvement activities over its 9 years in Cambodia. A significant contribution has been made towards the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015. This is shown by the "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Tool", so called because beneficiaries themselves provide their assessments of where they place their families in one of four groups; ultra-poor with vulnerabilities, very poor, poor and on or above the official poverty mark. For example the EC project completed in 2007 showed that 973 of 4,126 families had moved up out of poverty, with steady progress of about 20% families moving up by one or more category per year.

Photo – Sarus Crane courtesy of Eleanor Briggs and Wildlife Conservation Society. The crane is a highly endangered species whose sole habitat is in Kong Kleng.

Moving out of poverty is important but not enough. Success has to be sustained and families have to be able to withstand setbacks. These are achieved in three ways. Firstly, personal capacities are raised with enhanced skills to increase and diversify livelihoods. Secondly, cohesive self-help groups are formed to pool resources and skills in communities enabling new opportunities to be gained. Thirdly, federating these groups in to community-based organizations (CBOs) provides close access to higher level management and technical support as well as a strong basis for advocacy with local authorities. A second participatory tool monitors the progress of groups and CBOs as they develop over the years towards self-sufficiency. The same EC project shows that after just three years, 68% of 158 self-help groups are already almost fully able to manage affairs without Ockenden and partner NGO support. 29% are within one year of the same achievement.

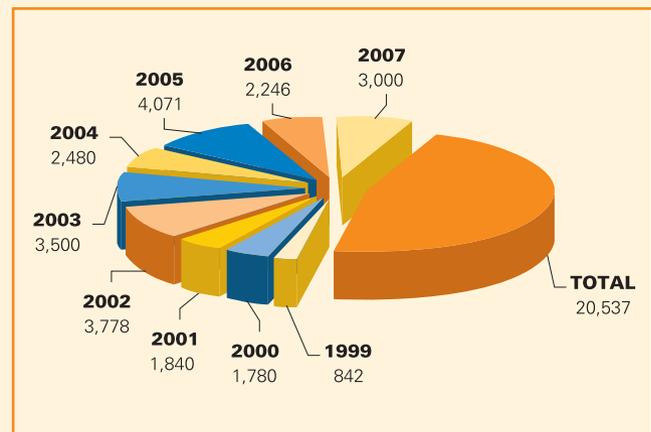
Ockenden-Cambodia has inherited a modern office complex, meeting-place, and training centre in Sisophon plus the Phnom Penh Office. They have modern computing and communications equipment. Ockenden-Cambodia and its partners have a fleet of five vehicles and dozens of motor-cycles. The staff development policy has meant that most of the 23 staff have considerably enhanced professional skills, through in-service training and external courses, ranging from technical skills to higher education qualifications.

Ockenden's original founder members would have been very proud, if they had lived to see this day. Back In 1951, in what was still an austere post World War II Britain, three schoolteachers, Joyce Pearce, Margaret Dixon and Ruth Hicks, started a movement that has since extended to all the major trouble-spots of the world including Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Sudan. Their first concern was for Latvian and Polish girls in displaced persons' camps. They brought them for education at Ockenden, a country house on the outskirts of Woking in England. The Ockenden Venture was born. Over the years their concern and devotion saw similar initiatives reach out to Lebanon, Jordan, Tibet, Vietnam and other countries. In fact the range of countries led to "Venture" being replaced by "International" alongside the Ockenden name. The full story can be seen on the Ockenden website and in other publications (see back cover). The selfless efforts of the founders; their supporters, and the many people who joined the venture, have been highly recognized - by Queen Elizabeth and by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan whose quotation appears top right.

“ Ockenden International is well known for the high quality of its work in very remote and challenging locations ”

Cambodia is of course synonymous with one of the greatest tragedies of the last century. Therefore it was natural for Ockenden to begin work in the refugee camps in Thailand, then to continue inside Cambodia once refugees returned. Returnees and even more internally displaced people began to look for homes, land, peace, stability, and their desire to find ordinary living. This booklet tells the story briefly. It goes on to describe the highlights and accomplishments of the last three years 2005, 2006, and 2007 and the final "localisation" handover arrangements. The main features of Ockenden's development programmes in Cambodia are also catalogued.

Ockenden direct beneficiaries: number of families:



Average rural household size is 5.3, thus total family member beneficiaries = 108,846.

Actual beneficiaries are greater as these figures cover only direct livelihood improvement activities within approved projects. Not added in are new beneficiaries joining later with recycled funds; people who only participate in training or community forestries, and villagers served by the latest NRDP project.



CAMBODIANS FLEEING

“The only way we could get through the mine-field to cross the border was to step on the dead bodies of the people who tried before us!

Former Refugee



The pictures may be of Cambodians but the scenes are the same wherever refugees flee and people abandon homes in the face of grave danger. It is happening today in Darfur, Iraq, and Kenya.

Cambodia's recent tragic history is well known. The peace of the immediate post-colonisation period of the 1950s was broken when it became embroiled in internal conflict and the spillover effects of the Vietnam War. The various factors militated to bring to power one of the most extreme regimes of modern history. From 1975 to 1979 the Khmer Rouge sought to impose a communist agrarian revolution that saw wholesale social upheaval and atrocities. Cities were abandoned, intelligentsia purged, religion banned with all the Buddhist monks defrocked. Millions of people died through starvation, illness, and execution if deemed as enemies of the regime. Many fled across the border to Thailand and in to refugee camps.

The Khmer Rouge was largely overthrown in 1979 by the Vietnamese Army and dissident Cambodian forces. A long period of international isolation then followed until 1991 when the Paris Peace accords heralded in the multi-national effort headed by the UN to establish lasting peace and democracy. The Khmer Rouge finally capitulated in 1998. The relative peace and stability enabled refugees to return, to an uncertain future, while the Cambodian leaders involved in the 1979 "liberation" formed then, as they do now, the nucleus of the ruling party. The Cambodian People's Party has retained a strong hold over the country, throughout three national elections and two local council elections. However the effects of prolonged conflict leave Cambodia as one of the poorest and least developed in South East Asia; with a pronounced unequal distribution of wealth, which still poses a great challenge to rebuilding the nation.

Cambodian refugees from 1975 onwards deserted their country. Many more simply abandoned their homes of origin. When they eventually ventured home, most found nothing to return to or discovered others occupying their land. Given the comprehensive breakdown of state and legal institutions, very few could reclaim their birthrights. They went in search of new places. Social mobility, whether "voluntary" or forced, or displacement, is now sadly an integral feature of rural and urban life in Cambodia. It is even regarded by the wealthy and powerful

as a necessary prerequisite of development. (Please see “community forestry activities” below.) Some refugees have chosen to stay in France, US, Australia, etc. All provinces have high rates of recent incomers, but the three North-West

ones have the highest incidences as well being the last areas of Khmer Rouge control; conflict, landmine infestation etc. This is why Ockenden chose to work there. Other serious problems exist. The relentless deforestation and land-grabbing of recent years has (and is still) removing people away from traditional lives and livelihoods. People affected form the constituency of Ockenden’s work. Its original beneficiaries, the refugees fleeing conflict, may have been served successfully, but new ones maintain the need for the unique skills it has cultivated of facilitating successful re-settlement and full social integration of poor displaced families.



Black & white photographs –courtesy of the Documentation Center of Cambodia - www.dccam.org

Although Ockenden International’s work with refugees is widely recognized, there is little documentary evidence and pictures of its activities with Cambodians in Thailand. People do remember it well including some who joined as staff members. Ockenden International though did not confine itself to serving returning refugees. Instead and consciously as per its mission, it worked with all re-settling groups from 1995 onwards often in new communities with former adversaries learning to live alongside each other. It opened its first country office in 1999. The cover picture is a snapshot of successful repatriation, re-settlement, and social reintegration. Nobody there on that day was caring where their loyalty once rested in the past. They were simply enjoying the bumper 2007 rice harvest; abundant supply of fish and shrimps, with children playing and able to go to school.



Kon Kleng, two visible successes – its cow bank herd free to forage in its own community forestry, one of the first to be approved in Cambodia.

Ockenden and its donors are proud of the exceptional achievement of its partner Kon Kleng Community Based Organisation (KKCBO). It is amazing how former jungle-fighters have embraced modern development and governance. They have warmly taken into their midst former adversaries and Cambodians of all backgrounds sharing the same plight of being homeless and landless. They have built a thriving sustainable economic, social, and environmentally-friendly community. Indeed their forestry and water environmental work has brought them worldwide recognition by conservationists. (Please see link on back cover) For KKCBO what matters most are ordinary people living in harmony in villages that are “on their way up”, with clinics, schools, roads, and private businesses all being built through their own efforts and co-operation with authorities and partners including Ockenden. They have, for example, the largest and most successful cow bank with 70 animals able to supply calves to their own community and to others.



HALL-MARK OF QUALITY PROGRAMMES

1 LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENTS/FOOD SECURITY

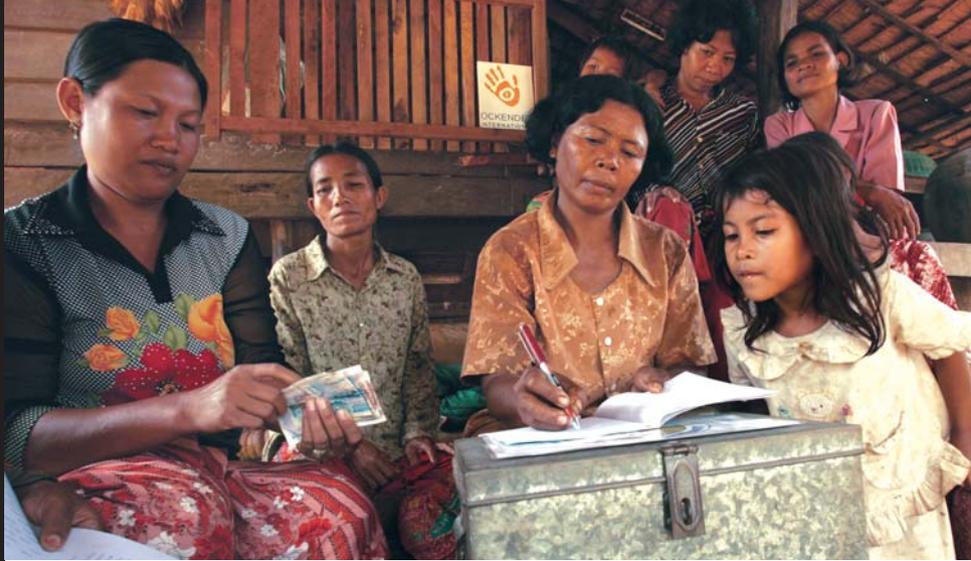
Ockenden's flagship programme was designed to tackle the extreme poverty of returning refugees and displaced people. 30% of Cambodians still live below the official poverty line in 2007 with the country on track only to reach half the millennium development goal of halving poverty by 2015. Cambodia is a rural economy; people have agricultural skills, but lack land, animals, tools, seeds, fertilizers, etc. This programme directly addresses those needs but not by hand-outs. Instead poor beneficiaries, supported by their communities, are encouraged to form self-help groups. Then with training, finding their own inputs however modest, and having proved their cohesion, they qualify for the capital injection they need to start farming or animal-rearing. Next, with support from their CBO or NGO, they themselves manage all inputs on a recyclable basis. So money is disbursed in the form of loans; affordable interest is charged. Not only is the initial outlay repaid and available for re-issue, but it accumulates over time, enabling new loans to be awarded to build and diversify wealth. It allows new members to join and benefit including the ultra-poor and families living with multiple vulnerabilities (disability, HIV/AIDS, women-headed households, etc). These people often miss out in other development projects. They are seen as too risky. Defaulting on loans could harm the original capital investment. With Ockenden they join once the fund is in profit. Most groups even manage to allocate profit for consumption – buying radios, or a TV, bicycle, pay health bills, enable children to go to school, etc. The fund is also used for group and CBO running costs and some advanced CBOs even make awards to their Commune Council development projects.



Kan Srey Oun (10) Mong Resei, Battambang says:

"Our first cow helps our family. She works for us. She makes compost and will give us calves to sell so I can go to school.

Kan Srey Oun appears all over Cambodia on everybody's favourite "Good governance poster".



2 CAPACITY-BUILDING AND SENSITISATION

Cambodians are naturally ingenious and self-sufficient as testified by the legendary Angkor Wat complex from a glorious past age in Siem Reap. Recent events have decimated human resource capacity and the institutions able to restore it. New livelihoods are not sustainable unless people have self-confidence, skill, knowledge and self-discipline. People must also be able to exercise those qualities in circumstances which remain favourable, i.e., with constructive support from neighbours and local authorities. Ockenden's second and third programmes help them achieve this.

The education, training, and organizational development components provide:

- Technical education and training so that new livelihood activities are carried out efficiently and successfully.
- Extension activities to increase productivity and diversify nutrition.
- Group-formation, community mobilization, and CBO management skills are acquired and practised effectively.
- Partner organization and internal OC staff, supporter, and Board of Director self-development.

3 GOVERNANCE AND ADVOCACY

Usually the greatest risk or threat to new livelihoods being sustained is through beneficiaries being deprived of their right to live in a place or to conduct their family business freely in the face of formidable obstacles laid by people in