

NEWSLETTER (18) – MARCH 05.... From KIM in Cambodia xxx

Hello again my friends...I am writing again so soon as I was a little late with my last newsletter, so you get two for March - Sorry!! I hope that life is good for you where ever and what ever you are doing, and I hope that springtime weather is bringing out the flowers in the UK and making everywhere look beautiful again.

It is definitely hotter here now, yet April is the hottest it gets, but it's the dryness and dust that is the real battle - everyone develops coughs and eye irritations from the dust. Now on Sunday afternoon at midday it is 35 degrees, not much different to 32 degrees overnight, so needless to say, I take many showers and have the fan on a lot. We are very fortunate now to have electricity for 24 hours, that happened last month, rumor is that it is a trial, I am just happy as it enables us to cope at home in the day over the weekends - instead of going to the office to work just to keep cool! I have a nice new fridge too, so cool drinks and a fan all day, plus electricity to charge my laptop means I can do work, watch movies, play games and write letters - the only thing is in the afternoon, the fan is blowing round the warm air, so its all a bit hot at that time, but I can easily cope with that! When I look back to last year with none of this luxury, I know that it is so nice, so cannot complain at all!

The 8th March was International Women's Day, I organized the event to take place in Chhlong on 7th March (as 8th is a public holiday!), and so with the support of the whole PFD team, we all attended the event in one of the nearby villages, at the



local pagoda. We had already invited many local women to attend, plus the volunteers and health center staff who work in that area, so it was great, there were men too, many present to hopefully take the messages home about protecting women.

Here I am (pretty in pink!), about to give my first big speech - to about 400 people - mainly on Safe motherhood and protecting

women from HIV, whilst the representative from Women's affairs spoke about domestic violence. At the event we invited the provincial and district governors to speak too, they did but for almost an hour in total, so the audience nearly went to sleep sadly enough! We soon woke them up with dramas, games, drawing competition and a quiz show - plus the inevitable balloon releasing ceremony, where important messages are sent into the sky attached to helium balloons! The only slight problem

we encountered was that the T-shirts I helped to design were all mixed up, so at Chhlong we got only small sizes instead of small and large - so lucky for all the children as they all got T-shirts, and some of the adults squeezed their way into these tiny shirts - though for some of us it was an impossible task! We turned the disappointment into good fun seeing all the PFD guys in their 'muscle shirts' as Judi called them, thought women were small enough to fit the shirts but some very old and powerful men ended up looking years younger in their tight fitting numbers!

I went to Kratie on Sat 5th March to use e-mail etc, and lucky me was there for another of Joe's wacky parties - this one was to celebrate - Joe's 45th Birthday, International Women's Day and Fran's (VI Volunteer in Kratie, 1 month) last week. Joe's instructions were that everyone had to wear a dress/skirt and lipstick, so I had to rush to the tailors to get a little number run up as only took trousers with me! I did not stop there - I felt like I had not been out for ages, so went to the beauty salon and had nails done (with funky little flowers on each toe!), and hair washed, dried, straightened and cut (in that order for some reason??), so looked a little different - all for \$2.00 - it felt shameful, so I left a rather bulky tip too!



So Saturday night, the fun started at 7pm, and I left at 3am, but the party was no where near finished then...I have become a lightweight!!(I was already 6 hours past my usual bedtime!) After sometime, the balloons used to decorate the bar - decorated all of us (as pictured here with 2 other VI volunteers!), and each of us did as Joe asked and wore our skirts or dresses. Joe was out the impress with a beautiful orange/black wrap around slinky dress which actually looked nice on him! - This was all because it was women's day apparently, however - the words 'any excuse' spring to mind! Good Fun tho!

What else has happened - well PFD had our Executive Director - Mr. Frank Conlan from Baltimore in USA over to visit, so we had a lovely reception at PFD Phnom Penh to welcome him. That was nice, the Phnom Penh staff worked really hard to transform the office into a nicely lit and welcoming environment. I had a slight faux-pas, as I thought that Frank was fat, so when two men entered the room, one fat & one tall, and the tall one spoke to me - I asked him "So, who are you then?"... "I am Frank" he said. I wanted to say, oh, sorry, I thought you were fat - but that is not so appropriate now is it? He did not seem too bothered, the fat man turned out to be the auditor, and Judi said that she told me he was 'big' not 'fat' - Whoops! Frank has worked in so many countries - mainly Africa, so he

was fantastic to talk to and he gave a wonderful speech about how PFD Cambodia was the first project of PFD, and how 12 years later, we are helping the people whose voices are not usually heard - Very Inspiring!!

The rest of my trip to Phnom Penh was filled with meetings and planning for the next year. We have just found out that we will get funding to continue for one more year with the existing program, so that takes it up to Sept 06 now. New programs are still needed then to ensure continuation of PFD in Chhlong, so I am working on that issue, but it is not quite as frantically needed now. I attended a meeting with Judi with Maryknoll again, this time to look into the work they do with orphans and foster children in Phnom Penh - it was fantastic to know about another wonderful program that truly cares for these vulnerable children. There are two programs - Little folks is for children affected but not infected by HIV, and Little Sprouts for the HIV infected children, they do marvelous work, and I could have listened to Father Jim Newman all day telling us of their work. If anyone wants a good story to read about dedication and compassion - check out on their website!

On my way back from Phnom Penh, I was called by Sonia who is one of the Christian 'Pioneers' in Chhlong, she wanted to know what to do in cases of suspected rabies. Now, as a midwife, not a nurse, my knowledge would normally not have extended there, but I had just been reading my 'Traveller's Health' book (medical bible!), and had recently seen an article in the 'Cambodia Daily' newspaper about rabies testing in Phnom Penh being under utilized...so I did know the answer! I knew that the people had to get to Phnom Penh hospital ASAP where there is only one lab that can test and treat rabies - there were 6 people in all bit by the dog that had not eaten or drunk for days. Sonia followed it all up, the dog was already dead, the people went to Phnom Penh, and so did the dead dog (to be tested!) - Turns out it was rabies, so now these people are all receiving the treatment for free (costs \$85 for foreigners!). So a happy ending hopefully, Sonia came to thank me for my help as she feels that these people are so lucky to be getting treatment that will probably save their lives - a real team effort I think!!!



I am now quite grateful to the quarantine laws of the UK and Australia that protects us from the threat of Rabies.

I could not resist taking this photograph of Setha during a game of volleyball where he took off his shirt to reveal the most common sign of recent illness - the signs of 'coining'!! Setha was laughing when he said he looked like a tiger with

these stripes on his front and back. This is a very common sight; in fact the landlord at my house must be ill as he is coined almost every week! It is done by rubbing on tiger balm and then scratching the skin in stripes with a coin or other metal circle (like a pizza cutter) until the skin raises and goes red - I had one stripe done once, and it went very hot and hurt like mad - leaving a bruise for almost a week! Now, Setha is a very well educated nurse and is very forward thinking - he is the Health team manager at PFD, so if he takes this type of treatment, there must be something to it?? I know of distraction, during a headache, pain on your body will lessen the headache - but coining really hurts! Somehow, I do not see this traditional practice catching on in the west, but I welcome reports to the contrary!

Other news from here is that Ivan resigned from PFD as he wants to go back to Uganda - so good luck to him. Nick is recovering from his recent hepatitis which sent the poor yellow guy home to England to recover in the hands of the good olde NHS...he is back now, to clock up 4 years working in Cambodia now! Karina is busy working on her research report, that is proving a little difficult as she only seems to have found problems with the nutrition program that she is here to evaluate - so I am trying to jolly her up a little, at least to look at the few good things that they do - ultimately, some very malnourished children are fed and do well afterwards! Enough said! Last but not least...we have had rain...a few minutes on the last 2 Sundays...how I missed rain!!!

So this about sums up my last few weeks, now countdown is on: 18 months done, 6 to go!!

Take care and be happy in all that you do..... All my love, Kim x