



Swiss Association since 2014

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UAC Newsletter October 2016



Pictures (from top left, clockwise)*:

1) New schoolhouse / schoolyard in Poipet, including recently discovered, uncontaminated fresh water and well drilling

2) Roofless school in Chong Kneas Village before refurbishment

3) UAC local team

(from left: construction engineer Leakana Blong, country manager Pisey Chin, volunteer Chandy Eam)

4) English and Computer teacher Mr. Bunna (2nd from right) with students and Thomas Gilbert (UAC volunteer)

*All recognisable persons have consented to this publication including the text

Dear Friends of UAC

It's time for an update from our pen!

Local license obtained and IT platform improved - UAC is becoming more professional

As to project-related work, it has been a bit quiet around UAC in the last five months. Our volunteers Vanessa Müller and Dave Dünneisen completed their last mission at the end of May (the metal mantling of a previously unsheltered house in the Siem Reap province) and returned to Switzerland in June. We would like to thank both, Vanessa and Dave, for their multi-month, voluntary service abroad.

This does not mean, however, that we have placed our hands in the lap. We have dedicated countless hours over the summer to the professionalization of UAC, to improve our marketing presence, to submit documents aiming at obtaining critical license and quality seals, to raise funds as well as to upgrade our UAC infrastructure, to find new exciting projects that fit our bill and to network in Cambodia. We have made ample background preparation and are now taking significant leaps forward. We are buzzing!

Among other things, we received the NGO license for our Cambodian subsidiary, that is: our main subsidiary. We are very proud to be able to carry out official projects in Cambodia under the United Asia Charity banner! Thomas Gilbert has co-financed the licensing. I would like to thank him in both my own and in the name of UAC. This being said, it is accompanied by commitments to the Cambodian authorities. Therefore we have to ensure that donations are deployed even more carefully than was anyway the case before. Here is the seal of quality from Phnom Penh:



Furthermore, our diligent IT guru Kim Thurnherr has upgraded our electronic platforms, improved the UAC website and harmonized our donation platform so that we can now easily track and document our finances using ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) tools and from a single source. Great praise to Kim!

UNICEF- Data about Cambodia: why UAC has to stay the course

At this point we would like to remind you why we are active in the provinces of Siem Reap and Banteay Menchey in particular - and in Cambodia in general. The following text passage will draw on the latest available dataset found on <http://data.unicef.org/country/KHM/> as well as UNICEF's latest Annual Review for Cambodia (2012). According to UNICEF, things have progressed in Cambodia in our core areas of water, sanitation, education and health, but continue to lag considerably behind the average standards prevalent in other Southeast Asian countries. This applies in particular to children (nationwide) as well as to all generations of the rural population in the provinces of the North-East, North and the Tonle Bassac River, i.e. in areas often frequented by floods and drought.

In Cambodia, only 51% of the total population of approximately 15.5 million have access to improved drinking water sources, with a sizeable gap between cities (81%) and countryside (43%). 87.4% of the urban population have access to sanitation facilities in their dwellings, while this amounts to a mere 33% in rural areas (country average across provinces: 44%). An estimated 8.1million Cambodians still defecate in open space. For the work of NGOs such as UAC, it is important to ensure that not only are toilets being installed, but also 'sanitary training' and follow-up support are included in the planning. Changing the behavior of the population requires patience and time.

There is also a lot to be done to further develop the educational system. While 86% of children attend a primary school and 92% of these actually finish, only 45% of 11-18 year-olds go to secondary school and on to a high school, following completion of primary school. One of the main reasons is the lack of local density in such secondary and high schools: as sketched out in the graph below, students at times have to earmark up to four hours for one-way commute until they reach an educational institution. *De facto* this means that parents have to invest in permanent accommodation for students, or that respective schools must offer dormitories. In short: campus-type infrastructure must prevail! Unfortunately, there is not much around. This is what motivates *inter alia* our school project in 'Poipet' and our large campus project 'Lotus Garden' (more about both these further below in this newsletter).

EDUCATION

Gross Enrollment ratio in pre-primary education (%)	13
Net attendance ratio in primary education NAR (%)	86
Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 (%)	92
Proportion of out-of-school children of primary school age (%)	2
Net attendance ratio in secondary education (%)	45
Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds (%)	87

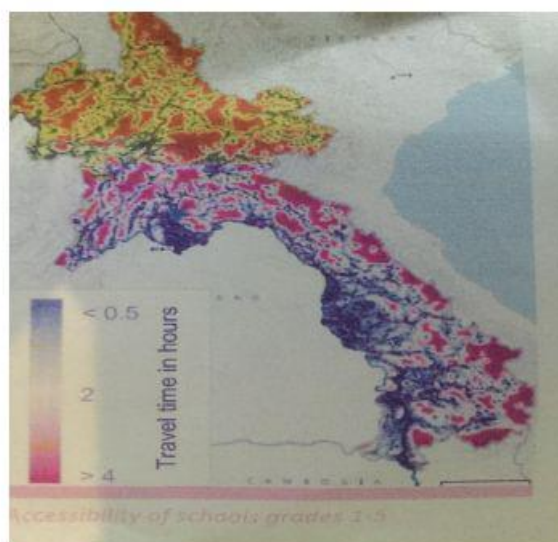
SANITATION

Proportion of population using improved sanitation facilities (%)	37
Proportion of population using shared sanitation facilities (%)	7
Proportion of population using other unimproved sanitation (%)	2
Proportion of population practicing open defecation (%)	54

WATER

Proportion of population using a piped drinking water supply (%)	18
Proportion of population using another improved drinking water source (%)	53
Proportion of population using an unimproved drinking water source other than surface water (%)	15
Proportion of population using a surface water source (%)	14

TRAVEL TIME TO SCHOOL



Source: data gathered from UNICEF Annual Review for Cambodia (2012)

‘Hands-on’ sponsorship - here is a prime example

As mentioned above, Thomas will be on the spot in Siem Reap/Cambodia for ‘active sponsorship’. He is an example of patrons who donate, but at the same time also provide hands-on aid. A donor who prefers to coordinate how his contribution is used, plus learn about the culture of an exciting, under-recognised part of Asia. For him, "a fabulous, fulfilling, entirely novel travel sensation after fifteen years of stop-and-go, chemical industry, research congresses, banking and company analysis".

He arrived at our base on in Siem Reap at the end of September and has already taken on several tasks. Not much different from his former employer UBS, he has a 14-hour day and a seven-day week - because he has set out like a blitz! He is working as project manager, alongside our Khmer country manager Pisey Chin, aiming to complete one large and one small project, both already identified. He will sponsor both from his own resources and is raising funds for UAC for the larger one (‘Poipet’), drawing on his private and professional network. We warmly welcome him and look forward to make progress with our vision "Water and Education for All"!

Successful emergency aid program Pre-School Chong Kneas - but we need additional grants of appr. CHF2000 to ‘tie the knot’ in a sustainable manner: **Fundraising campaign**

Would you have believed that with a mere 600 USD one can get the following done ?

Lead a previously under-nourished, liver-sick seamstress and teacher back into her professional life (by means of hospital care, home care, dietary supplements, 50 kg of rice and 15 kg of fruit)

- Fix three roofs of a schoolhouse / nursery school
- Fix partition walls between classes / recreation / sleeping rooms and thus create functionality
- Replace a defective hand-held water pump with an electric appliance to ensure access to water for cooking and washing
- Buy a used, modern sewing machine and 100m fine fabric to bring back to life a souvenir shop attached to the Pre-School, thereby providing a perspective for the financing of the land lease
- Purchase a football and two jumping ropes for the children’s class breaks
- Deliver books and toys (a big thank you to our Bosnian, British, Finnish and Swiss donors!)
- Re-establish daily routine and safeguard 20hrs/week computer science and English classes for twenty-five girls and boys aged between 6 and 13, and through this array of measures

This ‘emergency aid program’ for the pre-school of Chong Kneas Village near the well-known, rich in fish, and largest lake in the whole of Southeast Asia ‘Tonle Sap’ (approximately 25 minutes outside of Siem Reap) is a perfect case study for the sustainable way in which UAC selects, executes and completes micro-projects. In mid-September, a Canadian couple traveling through South-East Asia contacted me via the UAC website. They had been struck in awe by a souvenir shop found outside a school on the main road lakeside to Siem Reap, including wonderfully designed fabric. When they took a closer look at the school, they found a teacher in despair, Mr. Kek Bunna, heavily impaired building infrastructure, lack of water and fresh food, some twenty-five students and a rather ill seamstress, Mrs. Toun Borath.



Pictures (from top left, clockwise)*:

- 1) One of three destroyed roofs after monsoon storm - the one covering the dormitory for students
- 2) Tin-well-roof and classroom with new wooden partition after renovation
- 3) Pisey Chin (UAC) helps to install an electric water pump. Covering his left arm: defective manual water pump
- 4) Typical way of moving for UAC in Cambodia: moped (Pisey Chin, Thomas Gilbert - wearing helmet when driving!)
- 5) UAC sponsored sewing machine including refresher course for teacher Mrs Toun Borath - who UAC donors helped recover from malnutrition and hepatitis, so she can help resume duties and also generate much needed income for the school
- 6) UAC and Mrs Borath buying nice fabric in the outskirts of Siem Reap

**All recognisable persons have consented to this publication including the text*

After a two-hour visit to the pre-school, we assembled a care team on the same day. The most important task we performed at once: we drove the couple to the emergency care center, where infusions were placed, nutrients were fed and laboratory tests were carried out. Afterwards we went to the Provincial Hospital of Siem Reap. Mrs. Borath was lucky - the diagnosed liver disease was in the early stages and can now be slowed cured using medicine and via a changed diet. Just a week later we found our seamstress / teacher without her previously inflated belly and beaming in delight like the sun. We have been monitoring her continuously improving state of health ever since, by visiting the hospital every fortnight (total funds thus far deployed for hospitals, food and medicine: USD 80,-).

Our volunteer Chandy Eam performed the next most important task: clarification of the background story (how was it possible for the couple to end up cornered like this), the social environment, the school licenses, police records, information obtained from the commune, interviews with neighbours, creditors, tenants, parents and, of course, the teachers themselves (the couple has three children of their own).

In this context, first and foremost, we had to make sure that the hoard did not violate government policy with respect to residential care of orphan children. Since 2006, Cambodia has pursued a distinct policy which (http://www.unicef.org/cambodia/Fact_sheet_-_residential_care_Cambodia.pdf) seeks to avoid institutionalisation of orphans in the long-term (in partly illegal and 'look-alike' orphanages), but rather reintegrate them back into communes.

Many orphanages/nurseries/pre-schools therefore need a license, have to report monthly to the responsible municipal departments and to clearly document the minors' personal data. Mr. Bunna and Mrs. Borath, our teachers' couple, have been leading the Chong Kneas school since mid-2010. We indeed identified four out of twenty-five students as orphans. Not a single monthly report to the authorities is missing. For every single child there was a folder with documented history. The children

speak English - mostly in the early stages - and our random visits showed that teaching is performed stringently from 8-10 am and from 2-4 pm. In the breaks children and adults cook, tinker, sew or play in groups. All of this is performed within the boundaries of safe, sheltered and enclosed grounds. The children are not at all being hassled (commercially motivated 'child-watching trips' organized by hotels are not uncommon in Cambodia, at times tolerated or even instigated by parents and teachers) and there was no evidence for either violence or human trafficking. In Chong Kneas, the parents pick up their children at 5 pm. The four orphans stay overnight, in a bedroom that, however, we found unsheltered. The thing with the missing shelter should change for sure - we took action!

In a third step, we introduced a non-luxurious but pragmatic quick-fix of roofs, canopies, water supply and room partition walls. However, we did not do this ourselves, but rather assigned the role of construction supervisor to the motivated headmaster of the school, Teacher Kek Bunna. He picked up offers, made a budget, organized a worker, negotiated discounts, helped us with the installation of the pump, covered his roof, sawn the wood for the walls. We directed and assisted where necessary - and UAC financed this, for total funds of 270.-USD. But only this time, because the idea is that the couple should be in a position to bear any eventual future burden by themselves - without the support of UAC.

This brings us to the fourth step - securing the long-term financing of the Chong Kneas Village pre-school. As imposing school fees in this genuinely impoverished community would be futile and counterproductive, the teaching activity does and will not generate income. There is some small cashflow from rental income as well as from the associated souvenir shop. Mrs Borath, therefore, basically earned the income for the ongoing operation and her recovery was the critical step towards 'help for self-help'.

At the moment, the goal is to create a business plan so that the proceeds from the textiles made by Mrs. Borath can cover running costs while Mr. Bunna concentrates on teaching and a (to-be-determined) side job in adult education in the city. To this end, we invested in a more modern, more productive sewing machine (USD 150,-) and gave start-up capital (USD 100,-) for the purchase of textile materials. At the moment we accompany the couple in search of customers of larger quantities of their tasteful, typical Cambodian fabric works, in order to achieve risk diversion away from the more seasonal and lumpy income from the souvenir shop on the roadside.

If the couple gets that far - and it very much looks that way thanks to their stellar effort and the support of our UAC care team - the school would be in a position to sustain itself in the future - if it only started with a black zero! However, due to the past illness of the woman, the couple is in arrears with the lease of the school grounds, and by a little more than 2000 US dollars. The landowners are yet showing kindness, but our discussions with them indicate that a (even partial) debt relief has little chance of success. Here, payment through donations comes into play:

Fundraising call for Kek Bunna / Tuon Borath with a target of USD 2000. If the social background of this project appeals to you and if you share our opinion that UAC can credibly demonstrate both prospect and plan for a permanent retention of this socially valuable pre-school, we would then ask for you to make a contribution.

The project number for the donation is HEA-056/16-SR. Thank you very much for your interest.

Expansion, sanitary installations and water supply for the 'Poipet School' - UAC excels through its core competencies - and explores new dimensions

The reason why UAC has been working on this project in North-West Cambodia since the middle of 2015 is in fact rather accurately sketched by the background report of UNICEF which I previously referred to: UAC strives for a well-balanced, healthy ratio of primary vis-a-vis secondary schools and high schools, as well as access to both sanitation and clean drinking water on school premises. There are nine primary schools within a 35-mile radius of our chosen school, but only two secondary schools (one of them this one) and one high school (i.e. this one).

A typical primary school in the province of Banteay Meanchey can house up to 1000 pupils, and this is holds true for the Poipet Primary School (5 classes of 200 pupils) which happens to share a campus with both the Poipet Secondary and High Schools. For the secondary school, about 350 pupils will register for the next semester (probably divided into seven classes), and the school management expects roughly the same number of registrations and class size for the high school (which is still in a comparably bad state). Student average travel time to reach the secondary school will be cut to 20 minutes after completing the expansion, and as a solid second secondary school option is then on offer to parents in the province.

If all children of primary, secondary and high school students show up on class breaks, approximately 1700 pupils will gather on the generously laid out schoolyard. UAC will perform an upgrade to its infrastructure, thanks to the increased funds donated for this project.

Following the completion of a new school building in the spring (spearheaded by a Japanese NGO whose mission is now complete), and after our resources were exhausted, we have meanwhile resumed work and are now taking on the all-important step: water supply for the 700 pupils. While the primary school disposes of its own well, of a considerable greenery, even of a volleyball field, and last but not least of a rather modern toilet facility, the two other schools (secondary school, high school) lack these things.

In addition, the analysis of samples of water ponds in the vicinity of the school revealed a rather devastating result: 456-fold overconcentration of microbial (E.Coli) contaminants as well as traces of elements of the nitrogen group: phosphorus, arsenic (admittedly small but sufficiently irritating for UAC), antimony. Here, the school is currently pumping water across the field to the school grounds. We stop this altogether and work with all of local authority, school management and by educating the parents. We have to dig a new well - not quite as trivial and cheap a task on a turf such as this, with its hard-to-penetrate ground and its inhomogeneous, deep groundwater levels. Alas, local connaisseurs! A team of three local well workers was put together at the beginning of October and started searching for water.

The hundreds of students currently have access to a toilet complex with four seats, with girls and boys not separated. We found this in deplorable condition. Instead of tearing it down, teachers and parents together with UAC have agreed on a jointly organized refurbishment and upgrade. The older students will also join in. Everyone should feel as being part of it!

In addition, a completely new sanitary facility will be built so that after completion of this work, a total of eleven toilets (five for girls, six for boys including three latrines) will be available. At the heart of the rehabilitation is a system of water tower, water filter tank and water reservoir, which the ground water is pumped up and across to electrically. The water, which is being filtered by bioactive sand, is subsequently divided and directed, on the one hand, to the sanitary facilities and, on the other hand, to the drinking water facilities to be installed in the aisles of the schools. Yet again, water analysis and - unfortunately - budget restrictions will ultimately determine whether additional water treatment equipment (activated carbon filters, ion exchange, reverse osmosis system) will be installed as well.



Pictures (from top left, clockwise)*:

- 1) Existing 4-seat toilet facility (for 700 pupils) - after renovation / expansion, 11 modern toilet places are available
- 2) Additional toilet complex and greening according to UAC planning (drawing owed to Leakana Blong, architectural student and UAC volunteer)
- 3) UAC hand-picked, seven-headed local building team before the start of the sanitary work: labour for the locals
- 4) High School Vice Director Mr. Kung Thuch before the school adjacent water reservoir after receiving the results of water analysis ('Water for Cambodia' evaluation: 456-fold excess contamination with e.coli bacteria as well as arsenic traces)
- 5) There is only one way: to search for uncontaminated groundwater on the premises, and then drill a well. 19th Oct, 2016, 6.30am: The team actually did it! Everyone is on their feet buzzing around in the early morning! In the background: newly renovated school building
- 6) Next step - this is definitely in the budget now, thanks to generous donations: water tower / water tank / water storage facility (Drawing owes to Leakana Blong, architectural student and UAC volunteer)
- 7) If finances permit: to ensure absolutely best drinking water quality, water treatment / activated carbon filters / ion exchangers will have to be connected in series (courtesy of: Buntsey Srey High School, Siem Reap Province, filter system using activated carbon, installed in 2003 year by our partner 'Water for Cambodia ')

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We can proudly announce that our team of locals, on the 19th of October, at 6.30am, discovered uncontaminated groundwater on the school premises. The well is being digged while I am writing these lines. Half the village came in the morning to marvel at our find and to applaud joyfully. The Buddhist tradition of placing fruit into the school pagoda prayer place (also see photo, page 10) before the beginning of construction works and of lighting candles (a ceremony which is meant to bear luck for the workers) has come true and fulfilled its meaning!

Now that there is good water, we have begun to purchase the materials for the water tower and the sanitary facilities. We are currently conducting interviews to assemble a seven-man workers' group. We usually choose experienced construction workers, and thanks to the precise drawings of our volunteer and architecture student Leakana Blong, they know exactly where work is heading toward.

We aim to complete the project by the end of the calendar year- hence the schools' operation (start: 01st of November) should not be disrupted for too long. Wish us well!

We take grants dedicated to this project - please quote project number WAT 019/15 PoiPet School in case you want to contribute.

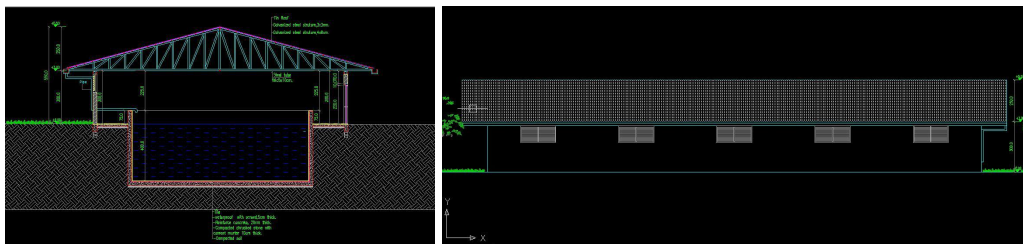
Our UAC dream - large water reservoirs and educational campus - is alive!

We also do not lose sight of the big projects mentioned at the beginning of the year, and keep you up to date. In this respect, our architectural student Blong Leakana, after completing her contribution to Poipet projects, has freed capacity to produce drawings for the large projects for us and using CAD (Computer Aided Design). Please have a look and check the initial result:

Newsletter UAC January 2016 / Here is the link to the old newsletter / all three projects are being described:

<https://united-asia-charity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Newsletter-UAC-Jan-2016.pdf>

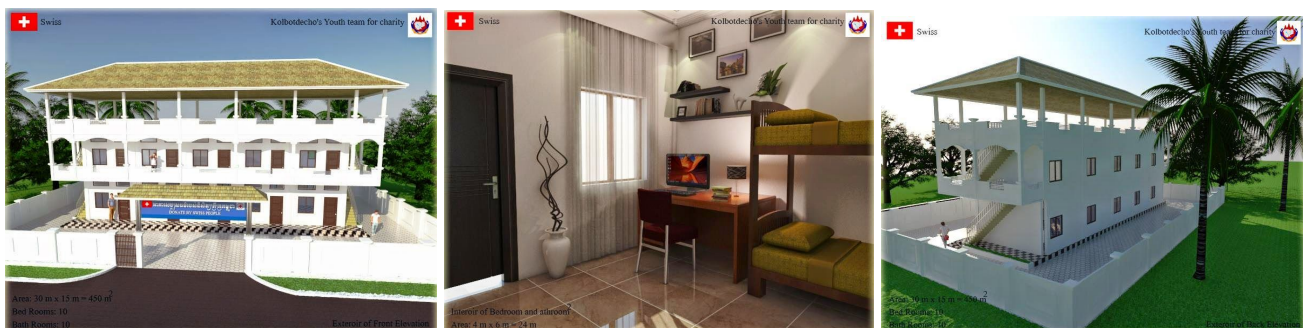
Big Reservoir:



Link to project outline:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jmoXnxloQloEiHWRRxAGPt4w_O-af119V6I9w4WGLGQ/edit?usp=sharing

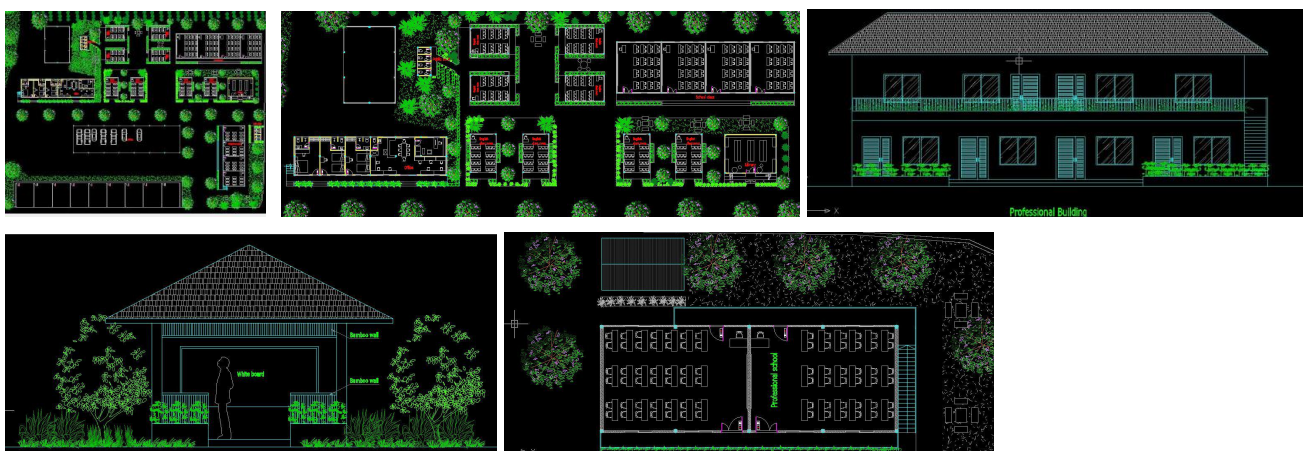
Student homes:



Link to project outline:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DOxTiLWIMF2x0ftlKmqB3s4TkDDMy17xPgZOcG10w1Y/edit?usp=sharing>

Campus:



Link to project outline:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z-VyE8vWWc6zGPA0qFTFI15x4_4CUqZXq2x7UdUJH4/edit?usp=sharing

**Have we tapped your philanthropic vein, convinced you, aroused your curiosity?
Please give us feedback of what you notice.**

We are very happy to accept donations - and here 'small' in one's imagination can mean '*tangible*' in the real world- into the following account:

<https://united-asia-charity.org/en/donation/>

Postfinance AG

PC 89-680569-1

IBAN: CH27 0900 0000 8968 0569 1

SWIFT/BIC: POFICHBEXX

It is also possible for you to visit our site at any time, to visit our work, and even to support projects. This way, you can see in action how and where the funds flow. If you are lucky, you can go with 'Mister Pisey' (Pisey Chin speaks English very well and has the nicest of personalities) and work with him directly on a renovation project, a water project, one of his tireless inspections of 'completed' projects or even on a life-saving ad-hoc trip. Especially for those of you who long for a ride on a 'Töff' or a Tuk-Tuk!



from left: lotus flower field on Lake Tonle Sap, pagoda temple on the Poipet schoolyard, Tuk-Tuk jam in Siem Reap, rice field near Buntay Srey

We see you in Cambodia!

<https://united-asia-charity.org/en/support/donor-holidays/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Enzo Sportelli".

(Founder & President UAC)