



## **FIRST HALF 2011 UPDATE**

Dear All,

Some of you may have visited our website [www.lotusculture.com](http://www.lotusculture.com) which was up and operating since end March 2011 after a bumpy technical start. However, we have since received feedback that information provided gives good transparency and we continue to welcome all feedback to continue to improve on this.

Figuratively, it has been several months of ploughing and sowing seeds and thankfully the shoots are just beginning to show. There have been challenges and we expect that there would be more given the many aspects to be dealt with to fund and develop the three types of projects where Lotus Culture (LC) supports AFESIP Cambodia. However, the efforts are taking root with the new structures to support a liveable future and specifically for four survivors (Pisy, Verleg, Chanto, Shreymom), this has begun.

### **Social Enterprise - Kumnit Thmey**

Kumnit Thmey (pronounced as Koom-Nit Ter-mai - Cambodian for 'new beginnings & ideas') has been set up as a re-integration alternative to provide fair wage employment and self development in a caring environment for survivors of human trafficking and sexual slavery. LC has worked out with AFESIP the basis for managing and operating Kumnit Thmey (KT).

KT is set up to produce sewed products for exports mainly to higher value markets in ASEAN countries, on a business to business (B2B) platform. Products include high quality cushion covers, table/bed runners, corporate gifts, and in the future recycled paper woven products. It is a small business with a social objective. Its success will be measured firstly by the social impact it creates for the lives of its employees; ahead of profitability which would be achieved in time.

A one year lease of a property in Phnom Penh starting 1st May 2011 has been contracted. The premise houses the KT office, production facilities as well as a dormitory for the employees. Mrs. Sokha, the supervisor, a skilled seamstress and a qualified sewing teacher joined KT on 1st May 2011. She has relevant skills on the production aspects and has experience in counselling and guiding the team of seamstresses in their work and lives. We are delighted to have her with us.

Four survivors, trained as seamstresses in the AFESIP shelters joined KT on 1st June 2011. Their orientation and bonding under Mrs. Sokha, with Lotus Culture guiding through multiple visits in June to Phnom Penh has developed the caring environment; yet with focus on achieving good quality production of the trial products for developing the products catalogue and preparation to deliver the project of cushions and bed runners to the first KT customer - a Singapore boutique hotel. Pisy, Verleg, Chanto, Shreymom under Mrs. Sokha's guidance are showing strong commitment, enthusiasm and sharing in their work and living together.



(Draft) Products Catalogue



First Collection of Tote Bags

The ongoing work done in both Singapore and Phnom Penh to support KT in product, packaging development and sourcing of fabrics continues. A critical success factor for KT going forward is to secure volunteer expertise on designing unique products and volunteers that would support us in making marketing inroads to secure customers for KT. We would continue to engage with businessmen in Phnom Penh and in Singapore to network and learn. We welcome all leads and support to secure projects and set the production momentum going.

LC has donated so far USD12693/- for the development, start-up costs and working capital of KT.

#### Education & Skills Development

Lotus Culture made its first donation (USD1630/-) for English-Khmer dictionaries and books for the Kompong Cham centre last year.

LC has since secured Saray Osiose, a French NGO helping women in the floating villages of Tonle Sap lake with water hyacinth handicraft production to hold training classes to teach weaving to survivors still living in the AFESIP shelters. This is to provide survivors with another handicraft skill to secure employment when they leave the shelters. Six girls from Siem Reap Centre, five girls from Tom Dy Centre and another 5 girls from Kompong Cham Centre have been selected for the one week course, which may be extended depending on how skills develop. LC has given a mandate (USD350/-) to cover travelling and material expenses in running the course.

#### Mental Healthcare Project

This project aims to develop the staff, capacity and management systems of the Psychology and Counseling Division of AFESIP to deliver a consistent model of care to the victims of trafficking and sexual abuse at all three shelters of AFESIP. Lotus Culture is providing financial support (USD9689/-) for one year of a volunteer Trauma Care Specialist position.

Candace Blase from the U.S. with over 30 years of education and experience in working with psychological care for victims of trauma and families and individuals in distressing circumstances, started in mid-April 2011. Her responsibilities are to manage both the project and the partnership with Ragamuffin, an NGO using art therapy for trauma counseling. Candace will resource and build the structure, procedures, policies and administration of the Psychology department. She will develop the national member of staff who will be the clinical coordinator and provide clinical supervision for the psychologists working in Tom Dy,

Kompong Cham and Siem Reap Centres and the Phnom Penh Clinic. The first pilot year will be focused on Kompong Cham Centre, with a view to the rolling out and managing all programs across the other two Centres in the subsequent years.



Kompong Cham staff training session



Victims engaged in an art activity

### Our Volunteers and Fund Raising

Donations received since the incorporation of Lotus Culture till end June 2011 amounts to some SGD101.3k, of which a total of SGD30.4k disbursements to support Education & Skill Development, Mental Healthcare and KT, has been made. There is some SGD70k available of which another SGD14k has been committed to KT and budgets are being worked on for 2012.

LC is partnering with Centre of Social Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy whereby a group of NUS Business School students are undertaking their consulting practicum project with LC for one year. They support LC in several aspects, one of which is raising awareness on human trafficking and fund raising in Junior Colleges and special focus schools as part of the community involvement project activities.

Raising awareness and fund raising by LC will be an on-going activity to build up the reserves to support the three types of projects as and when they are formulated, in addition to financially supporting KT as it grows and develops. Ongoing efforts to formulate and execute the fund raising plans are being progressed.

Our sincere thanks and appreciation go to all our donors, volunteers and supporters. Your continued generosity will touch and help change lives.

Warmest Regards

Sylvia, Lai Har and Pak Kheng

30th June 2011