

A letter from Cambodia

Erol and Guy Broadley visited 2 of the relief centres in Cambodia in October 2009. Read their report below:

Just a quick line to say Broaders and I survived the typhoon, minefields, lack of roads, and crazy tuktuk drivers during our little jaunt to Kymer. The typhoon hit Vietnam and Cambodia and both have massive flooding. Siem Reap, in northern Cambodia, is totally flooded....the roads are 2 ft deep in water, but everyone just gets on with it.

We ventured NW into Banteay Mancheay province to visit 2 centres (this area was a Kymer Rouge stronghold...so has the highest number of landmines in the country, probably the world). We ended up driving 30km off road on little more than mud tracks, through villages that consist of a few huts on stilts children on bicycles and mopeds (main mode of transport).

We left the storms and rain of SiemReap (well, the whole of Asia) and as ever on a "Coley Day" the sun came out. I am not kidding, it was sunny all day. Weird. Our driver and guide from ActionAid could not believe it! It had rained non-stop for 4 days. It remained sunny, blue skies all day until the black clouds returned later in the day, just amazing. I hope the photos come out well and do it justice.





We saw 2 centres that are used 7 days a week for teaching, womens' health classes and as a safe, dry place for kids to play. We watched kids (aged 4-6) being taught in both centres - to see 25 smiling faces looking up & learning was truly awesome. They were all so happy and smile all the time, it is definitely worth all that fundraising we did. On a Sunday morning they have arts classes to practise drawing (paper and crayons), all their pictures are on the wall. At the 2nd centre the local chief came to see us, he was just awesome, he was so happy to see us and we felt very humble.

The centres are built on a field that has been cleared of all land mines (they hope) ... but the field behind has not been cleared. We heard a mine explode during the morning...you only hope it was a controlled explosion by one of the 2 mine clearing teams we saw close by. We were told not to stray off the path or where a foot print was not already visible - actually it was quite frightening.

A few highlights the truck getting stuck in a marsh and us all having to push it out (taking 1.5hrs in 30degree sun), the little 4-year old boy hugging me, the smiles of the children, watching them play pass the parcel and the losers having to sing or dance in front of the class, seeing the class in the first centre read out from the whiteboard "Adam Cole Foundation" after it was written in Kymer, seeing the boggy marsh field that in the summer allows them to kick a football and play volleyball (the closest thing to a national sport they have out here), seeing red flag after red flag saying danger land mines, but equally blue sign after blue sign saying "Field cleared of land mines", being given a bunch of flowers when we arrived at the first centre, did I say how happy they looked in our schools?, their smiles, all of the children waving good bye to us, their smiles.



ActionAid, with our help, have done an amazing job. It was awesome, they are SO poor (but well fed it seemed due to the rice, fruit, cows & chickens) it is unreal but no one looked unhappy. I don't think we, the West, needs to change their way of life, just clear the mines and provide every child the chance and the right to an education. Fundamentally, their society is intact and in order and they are very, very happy. Talking to our guides they did say the government is on a knife edge and the feeling is the country either continues to grow and prosper and leave the Kymer Rouge etc behind, or there is a danger corruption and communism will return.

Cambodia is a beautiful place with amazing people. We hope this makes you happy you have given the ACF some money over the last 3 years.

