



# Christmas Special Edition Newsletter

## A Christmas message from the Chairman

Dear All

2009 has been a truly amazing year for the ISF. After two transformational events in late 2008 – the appointment of Kate Griffin as our country manager in August and the finding of our new school building in Stung Meanchay in December, the charity has gone from strength to strength.

Our education activities in the Stung Meanchay garbage dump area continue to grow and develop. The new building has proved to be perfect for our needs with 8 classrooms, shower facilities for the children, a great dining room and kitchen, a sports hall on the roof and a wonderful playground. In addition we now have 10 professional teachers, a full time nurse as well as full time cooks and security guards. Everything that is needed to provide our children with the highest quality education in a safe friendly environment where they can learn and have fun at the same time. During 2009 we instituted a fast track system whereby our children now cover two years of the state curriculum in one year to enable them to catch up the lost time when they didn't go to school prior to coming to the ISF .

In October 2008 the first tranche of our children 'graduated' to the state system. We are very proud of our 'graduates' from 2008 as, at the end of the 2008/09 school year they came first in the league of children for attendance and effort at the Stung Meanchay State school that they now attend. As a treat for this they were all taken on a skating trip, they had a wild time. We now have 40 children who we sponsor through the state system as well as 120 children in our own facilities. All these children, whether being taught in our school or being sponsored by the ISF in the state system are given free uniforms, pencils ,books etc, free lunches, a monthly food parcel for their families, free medical and dental care and additional lessons on top of the standard Khmer curriculum. A great package of learning and fun.

This year we finished the year with our first Christmas party at the new school. It was an amazing afternoon with the children giving a spectacular show of traditional Khmer dancing and enacting a play about their lives before they came to the ISF. We held a prize giving for the students, had an unexpected visit from Father Christmas and finished with a great disco where everyone joined in, Trustees and staff included. We then we all cooled down with a water fight in the playground when the children had the chance to soak not only themselves but also all the Trustees and guests. An opportunity they grabbed with relish as bucket after bucket of water was thrown over the Trustees. The children's laughter could be heard for miles around .



I have now been going to Cambodia for over four years since the ISF was first set up by a group of like minded friends and continue to aim to visit Cambodia three to four times a year. I have watched all our children grow so much in so many different ways over that time. They can now read and write in Khmer, they are beginning to learn English, they are significantly more healthy after receiving two proper meals per day and proper medical treatment when necessary, but more than this, they have grown so much in confidence and have had the opportunity to enjoy their childhoods rather than having to work scavenging for garbage every day. The changes I have seen have been truly transformational.

I would like to thank all those who have supported the ISF during the year, the many friends of the ISF around the world who have given so generously of their time and money, our truly excellent teachers and staff on the ground who are the team

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who are actually changing the lives of our children, my fellow Trustees who have all shown total commitment to the work of the ISF, the volunteers who have spent time with us during the year but most of all to Kate who has lead the work of the ISF in Cambodia with such enthusiasm , professionalism and dedication.

Thank you everyone. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas as we finish 2009 but look forward with enthusiasm , commitment and excitement to 2010.

Peter Slater

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## 2009 Angkor Wat International Half Marathon

It was 5.15am in Siem Reap and very dark when we made our way to the designated pick-up point. The trip out to Angkor Wat was a caravan of buses, trucks, cars and tuk tuks weaving towards one of the most amazing man-made wonders of the world. Headlights cut a path through the dark.

There were a range of competitors, those stretching and focusing on achieving a better time than last year, hoping their months of training would pay off and then there were those wondering why they were doing this again and maybe they should have had a warm up run in the lead up months!

10 minutes after the wheelchair athletes headed off, it was our turn at 6.30am. The sun was rising, Angkor Wat was being revealed in all its splendour. A cracking pace was set by ISF's Martin Cubbon and the lead runners; the rest of us were focused on maintaining a good pace, so that we could spot Cubbs at the one time our paths crossed. We wanted to ensure that he saw us in full stride; after that it was down to serious walking and talking. A lot of ISF supporters flew down from Hong Kong and it was a great opportunity to discuss the various ISF programmes and future plans.

All the way around the course there were smiling, laughing children, urging us on with high fives and shouts of "You No. 1". Michael Brogan, Kate Griffin, Chris Harford, Amanda Hayes and Ulli Niedermeyer helped push two wheelchair competitors 5kms to their pick-up point; great spirit and co-operation. As the morning wore on the task had become more hazardous, sharing the small road with two lanes of traffic which had tourist buses, tuk tuks an ambulance and taxis.

When the last kilometre came into view we realised a few of us would match Cubbs with our own personal best time, Cubbs: 1 hour 38 minutes, The Walkers: 3 hours 15 minutes. The amount of support and encouragement we had from competitors who had completed the course was amazing over that last kilometre.

I would be remiss not to mention the good performances of Helen and Rob Gazzi, Genevieve and Piers Verman. Mark Ashall had an excellent run, though we are awaiting the blood tests, as surely his time could not relate to a diet of beer and fish and chips.

Thank you to everyone who sponsored the runners and to all the supporters during the year.

Merry Christmas and all the best for 2010!

Leo Brogan

### **ISF wish to thank all those who participated in the Marathon on Sunday 6th December 2009**

Thank you to Amanda Hayes, Chris Harford, Genevieve Verman, Piers Verman, Peter Clarke, Olly Stratton, Mike Scantlebury, Julia Brogan, Olivia, Jennifer Deayton, Kay Bayliss, Heather Deayton, Paul Deayton, Paige Deayton (age 8), Erin Deayton (age 6), Lindsay Lyons, Richard Lyons, Christine Messervy, Diane Orange, Emily O'Toole, Ross O'Toole, Nicky Patterson, Bernice Fargus, David Fargus, Andrew Fargus, Karmel Schreyer, Darrel Kingan, Emi and Blaise Kingan (ages 10 & 7), Edward and Lily Schreyer, Emelyn Marquez, Helen Gazzi , Ulli Niedermeyer, Peter Slater, Martin Cubbon, Mark Ashall, Leo Brogan, Michael Brogan, Rob Gazzi and Martin Smith.

The support given to these participants was phenomenal. There were so many people who helped that we are unable to thank them individually but please know that your support is greatly appreciated.

# Christmas Party



The countdown to the 4th December started about 3 months ago when we announced to the kids that we would be having a Christmas party. Their excitement grew as they learned that the Trustees of ISF and a variety of other visitors would be attending!

The party was used as an opportunity to showcase the children's talents as well as acknowledge those with outstanding achievements. The party was scheduled for 2pm but preparations began long before that!

The morning began with regular classes to allow us to make all the preparations. Our board members arrived in the morning and taught P.E. classes which consisted of a variety of games from egg and spoon races to skipping races. The howls of laughter were testament to the fun had.

For those board members who arrived late they were relegated to filling water balloons for the water fight due at the end of the party!

After the children had lunch at 11am, preparations began with the dancers who had been practicing for the last few months and were about to be transformed from students to performers. The girls sleeping room temporarily became a salon and no one slept that day! The room was buzzing as hair and make-up transformed the kid both boys and girls alike. Our dance teachers very generously loaned us the costumes needed and by the time the children were made up and dressed, they were hardly recognizable to us!

The nerves set in just before they were due to start so a dress rehearsal in front of everyone was required to settle them! When finished we introduced them properly, the music started and they just blew us all away! I'd seen many a rehearsal coming up to the day but none in full costume and not only did the kids look spectacular, but they preformed brilliantly.

After the dance recital, the children who attend our Boeng Salang centre where they study English preformed a play about what happens at ISF. It was quite entertaining to see their perception of the work we've undertaken and ended with the unveiling of a 'Thank You' poster designed to thank everyone who supports ISF.

This was followed by a prize giving ceremony. We rewarded the top 5 children in each class with prizes which were very generously donated by the students at UWC East Campus in Singapore. The UWC students had packed zip-lock bags with toothpaste, toothbrushes, notebooks, colouring pencils, candy and a variety of other novelty items. The children were delighted with the gifts they received and it has motivated them to work hard next year to be the recipients of the prizes.

We had a surprise visitor afterwards when Santa arrived and gave all the children pencil cases filled with novelty items. It was highly entertaining to see their reaction to something they'd not experienced before! After Santa left, the children presented our board members, some guests and our staff with 'Certificates of Appreciation' to thank them for their contribution and support.

Everyone was then treated to ice-cream and cookies followed by a disco. The day ended with a traditional ISF water fight where the kids, staff and board members epitomized one of the ISF philosophies – FUN! Each child was supplied with a new t-shirt as they left the school and headed home with more childhood memories that will last them a lifetime.

Thanks to everyone who made the day such a great success.

