

## Partner a whole village in Cambodia!

It's great that you're interested in changing people's lives in Cambodia through Village Partnership!

Here's how it works:

In Cambodia, ALWS has worked for a long time in the very poor Aoral district. The project in this district has an **integrated** and **empowerment** approach to development:

Integrated approach = all of the development activities work together. For example, rather than just a well being built, the project also makes sure that there is training in how to fix the pump if it breaks, training in good water and sanitation practices, and suitable access to the well!. Its location and its impact on the water collectors (women) also need consideration. There is no point putting in a well if it creates problems in other aspects of the people's lives.



- Empowerment approach = the people in the villages are given the necessary training and support to make their own decisions about the development which happens in their village. This means that they then have ownership of and responsibility for everything that happens. They develop the confidence to work their way out of poverty and can feel excited about creating their own future!

Therefore, partnership with a village in Cambodia involves meeting whichever needs are the greatest in that village at the time.

### What you get:

- A connection to a developing community
- A way to bring your church community together
- A chance to show others our church in hands-on service
- A village profile giving you background information on the village
- A proposal, stating how fund will be used for village development
- Photos of village members (where possible, and permission is granted)
- Two 6-monthly reports to let you know what's happening in the village

- Access to curriculum to learn more about development and social justice
- The opportunity for one supporter from your group to join a self-funded trip to visit the program in Cambodia

#### **What you're giving:**

- Empowerment - the villagers make their own development decisions about their future.
- Dignity - this isn't a handout. The people are working hard to manage the process of development for themselves.
- Practical help - you provide the financial means for the villagers' development decisions to be implemented.
- Independence - equipping the people with skills and knowledge through training means that they are able to work towards independence.
- Hope - for a better future!

There's also the opportunity to send a photo and short profile of yourself to your village, if you'd like - they'd love to meet you!

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

##### **Do the people in the village speak English?**

Very few people in the villages speak English. The children learn English at school but it is at a very basic level.

##### **Can we visit the village and help out in some way?**

One member of your group will have the opportunity to visit the program in Cambodia, and possibly your partner village. However, this must be subject to the consent of the community itself and the convenience of the program staff. Other factors such as accessibility (some villages are quite remote), limited infrastructure (eg accommodation) and security concerns would also have to be carefully considered.

The empowerment approach outlined earlier means that the opportunities for hands on involvement is necessarily limited. Our experience shows that by far the best way to help people effectively and efficiently is simply gifts through ALWS that support projects owned and implemented by the community.

Unless someone is able to bring skills not locally available and can speak the local language, 'helping out' can create more work for project staff who already have demanding work schedules and very specific project objectives to meet.

That said, if there is a development activity underway or planned at the time of a visit, which may allow some hands on interaction, then that could be arranged with local staff prior to or at the time of your visit.

### **Can we have a say in what is done in the village?**

To ensure our development projects bring permanent change to the community, we work to make sure projects are 'owned' by the community. Therefore, the villagers make the decisions about what is needed for the future of their village themselves. They are able to do this because of the training they have received from the Lutheran project and because of the support of the development-trained Cambodian staff who live with them in the village. They know their environment and situation well and are therefore best-placed to make these decisions. This is such a fundamental part of the development process and you can be confident in the decisions made by the villagers with the support of the highly-skilled staff in Cambodia!

### **How does ALWS make sure the specific village we're partnered with receives our support?**

The village partnerships are an integral part of the ALWS-supported programs in Cambodia. Therefore your gift is an integral part of the overall ALWS funding provided to the country. This enables us to deliver your support efficiently, as well as provide monitoring and auditing of the project. It has the important added benefit that a village is not suddenly left 'high and dry' if a donor is unable to continue their partnership. To make sure you know exactly how you are helping, your partner village will prepare reports for you, including a budget and a detailed update on the different stages and aspects of village development.

### **Can we send over a DVD of ourselves to the villagers? Can the kids write letters or draw pictures for the kids in the villages?**

We understand that you'd love to communicate with the people of your partnered village - unfortunately in practical terms, it's not very easily done. Anything sent over would need to be sent to the headquarters of the project (the village doesn't have a post office or mail delivery centre). However, the villages are often a long way from the headquarters and the staff in the district may not meet with them so frequently. The staff work so hard and such long hours already that we don't want to add to their duties! In addition, they would rarely travel with a laptop which would be needed for showing a DVD. There is also usually no electricity supply. Your initial profile and photo would be greatly valued by the community there.

### **Can we send over books/clothes/utensils etc to the people in the village?**

Many generous people, recognizing how blessed we are here in Australia and New Zealand, feel moved to share what they have with families in poor communities.

However, the mechanics of sending goods overseas generally make this an impractical and inefficient way to help people:

- shipping costs are very expensive
- customs duties can cost more than the value of goods themselves
- the partnered villages in Cambodia are in remote regions, and transport costs can be high
- managing transport and distribution of goods can use a large amount of staff time, better applied elsewhere
- providing goods may not be "the development" the village needs

- goods may not be appropriate for the local situation, and therefore may need to be discarded
- it can be difficult to make certain all members of the village benefit equally
- sourcing goods locally provides employment opportunities and benefits the local economy

For these reasons, ALWS does not support sending gifts-in-kind overseas. Donations of money are by far the most practical, efficient and effective means of helping.

**Are the villagers Christian?**

The vast majority of people in the villages are not Christian - most of them would probably identify as Buddhists. Your assistance to these people is a wonderful reflection of God's unconditional love for us.

For further information or if you have any questions, please contact Jen Pfitzner on 1300 763 407 or [alws@alws.org.au](mailto:alws@alws.org.au)