

## **Cambodia Community Outreach Program:**

When working with communities at home or abroad, our responsibilities extend beyond engineering. One of the most important aspects of this project is working *with* the local people. Just like you know your room or neighborhood better than any outsider, the people of Banang know their home better than you do. We can learn a great deal from our partners in Cambodia if we work with them as one team! Your goal in this assignment is to find ways to clearly communicate your ideas with the community in Cambodia.

Below is a list of questions that two groups in the community have asked. You must answer their questions but be creative with your responses. You do not need to just respond in words. You may come up with a workshop or create a poster or show a demonstration. Consider your different audiences (community leaders and children). Would you speak to these two groups in the same way?

	<b>Community Leaders</b>	<b>Families and Children</b>
<b>How will you help our community?</b>		
<b>Could you explain the project and how we will solve the problem together?</b>		
<b>What can I do?</b>		

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How will this solution help our community in the future?</b></p>		
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**The Spotlight is on Our Cambodian Partners:**

**Narith**

Sometimes, people come along in life that surprise you with their abilities. You probably know a consultant who's a closet painter; maybe an advertising desk jockey training for a marathon; and let's not forget about your new intern who is much better at your job than you are. Meet Narith: field engineer for our project, and all-around nice guy.

We first met Narith at the site, where he was diligently engaged in something other than what we needed him to do. This moment expressed a more general challenge with the project - how to persuade a group of people, to whom we were total outsiders, that the methods they've been using all their lives are flawed at best, possibly even dangerous. How do you tell a crew of native-born construction workers and engineers, through a language barrier, that a pack of post-pubescent kids who grew up listening to 2 Live Crew knows embankment construction better than anyone else around? It wasn't the easiest thing we've done.

We all came to Cambodia having cut our teeth on the New York City design and construction scene, where showing up to a meeting without your guns drawn means you'll be serving coffee to the big Italian contractor for the remainder of the project. But there's a different feel in Southeast Asia - rather than fight you, these people would rather be your friends. Only a few days after our first meeting, our team was sharing a hot-pot with Narith and his wife at a local barbecue restaurant - a few days later, we began to introduce some of our methods, and found them gradually breaking through the language barrier and into Narith's project routine.

By the end of the trip, it became clear that Narith had a burning desire for us to leave behind our level, the piece of equipment he is shown holding. While we would normally return with any equipment we brought with us, his winning combination of Khmer charisma and gravity-defying mole hair (So Pheap: "It's lucky!") eventually won us over. To this day, Narith remains our eyes and ears in the field; our project, with all the bumps along the way, is certainly fortunate to have him.

**So Pheap**

In a country known for its not-quite-finished roadways, even the most robust moto-scooters meet a daily challenge in commuting around town - but high costs restrict car ownership to the Cambodian elite. Thankfully, we have had the good fortune to cross paths with one of the Khmer glitterati: our driver, So Pheap.

With a quiet demeanor (So Pheap translates roughly to "polite") and a ring on his left hand that would rival

those generally reserved for Italian mafiosos and Super Bowl champions, he escorts us to and from the project site every day. The trip is only about 20 miles, but takes close to two hours - much of this time is spent in the short but treacherous length of unpaved roads close to the site, where So Pheap fearlessly navigates us through floods and fields, braving herds of cattle and dark of night (although I think the dark of night scares him a little bit) to carry us safely to our destinations.

Admittedly, our schedule on this trip has been a bit unruly. Often, complicated site conditions arise that require inspecting, or temples come up that require visiting. Yet, with all the confusion, the well-groomed So Pheap diligently manages a busy schedule of driving, napping, and feeding our obsession with dirty Khmer words. Indeed, this driver of a Toyota Camry - a car blinged with "VIP" stickers on the front and sides - is, without question, a Very Important Person.