



## PROJECT SABAI 2009

by Derrick Guo

*Happy faces galore after a day's hard work!*

I will always remember the day when we were doing health screening in the schools, and there was a long queue for consultations with one of the doctors who had accompanied us. The children were getting restless so I took out surgical latex gloves to teach them how to count in English to keep them occupied. I inflated the gloves to mimic hands for counting, and the children were very excited. This puzzled me as they were just normal gloves. It was only after I had given away the gloves to the children that it dawned on me – they had never seen balloons before! It was a clear example of the disparity between the children in Singapore and Cambodia, and how something so simple could bring them so much joy.

Heartened by the positive change that has been made in the lives of ordinary Cambodians over the past five years that Project Sabai has been in existence, a team will be returning to Cambodia once again this December to work with the locals to improve their healthcare. We will be conducting health screenings, clinical consultations and a comprehensive health education programme at three schools, namely Tuol Kork, Teuk Thla and Phum Chreh, where we will be teaching students the essentials of healthy living and performing basic procedures such as the cleaning of wounds, removal of hair lice, charting of growth of the children, checking for

anaemia and malnutrition as well as providing medication for the sick, and supplements for the malnourished. The accompanying doctors will also be doing consultations for the children. Our dental counterparts will teach the children proper toothbrushing techniques and distribute toothbrushes and toothpaste. And for the very first time, we will also be performing surgical procedures such as tooth extraction.

We will also be conducting medical and dental check-ups for the villagers at Phum Chreh. During the check-up, we will be carrying out physical examinations of the abdomen to address complaints of abdominal pains, and conducting blood tests to detect ailments such as anaemia or diabetes. The doctors will also hold consultations and perform simple medical procedures, such as vaginal examinations on female villagers.

As part of our project development, we will be working on several new aspects in addition to continuing the work of the batches before us. This year, Project Sabai will be conducting systematic home interviews to find out more about the healthcare demographics typical of local Cambodian villagers, as well as understand the living conditions and habits of the local population. A milk programme will be put in place at the local schools to help combat malnutrition amongst young students, and we will be ascertaining its effectiveness and working with the schools to help them monitor and improve



All smiles as the kids receive new sets of PE kits designed by Project Sabai.



The medical students leave no stone unturned while checking the children for hair lice.



Dental students give the children some hands-on tips for brushing their pearly whites.



Derrick meticulously examines a student's ears.

the situation. Constantly seeking to improve the level of care provided to the locals, we will also be shadowing doctors involved in humanitarian projects in the vicinity this year, to observe how we can further refine and enhance our health screening programme. We will also be collaborating with medical students in the local universities to find out how we can garner more local support for our programmes in the three villages and beyond.

From our previous trips, we realised that the children do not have a proper PE kit which they can play safely in, resulting in numerous injuries on their feet during physical activities. The students are also unable to afford stationery for their daily schoolwork, and the local villagers are not able to afford medication needed for chronic ailments. We recognised these problems, and are seeking to help provide them with essential items. A small donation would certainly go a long way for these children and the Project Sabai team would hence like to appeal for your help.

Sabai means 'happy' in Khmer. Albert Camus once said that those who bring happiness into the lives of others, cannot keep it from themselves. Would you like to bring some sunshine into your life and that of many children today?

"Love is never wasted; it always comes back to you a hundred times over." SMA

**A contribution of \$2 would help an eager student buy the stationery he needs for schooling; a donation of \$10 would enable a young child to obtain proper clothes and shoes, so as to play with his friends safely, and a gift of \$20 would help a villager pay for his medication for a year. Please contact Derrick Guo at 91181060 or email the Sabai team at [projectsabai2009@gmail.com](mailto:projectsabai2009@gmail.com) if you would like to make donations of drugs, equipment or funds. Any form of sponsorship would be most welcome.**



Derrick Guo is a second-year medical student whose passion lies in working with the less fortunate in developing countries. Having helped out in Project Sabai last year, he will be embarking on a trip once again this year alongside a team of like-minded medical students, dental students, dentists and doctors. Here, he shares the experience which left a significant impact on him:

"Being an enthusiastic first-year medical student, I joined Project Sabai and embarked on a humanitarian trip with 25 other medical students and 4 dentistry students to Cambodia in 2008. I was very excited about the trip as it would mark the first "product" of my medical training and we would get to utilise our medical knowledge to conduct health education and screening

for the children of Cambodia. However, instead of being the "product", the project turned out to be the "fuel" for my future as a medical professional. The warmth, generosity and love that I experienced taught me that regardless of who you are, you will always have something to give – Love."