

CAMBODIAN OPPORTUNITY

A potentially and mutually beneficial opportunity exists for interested Western Australian independent schools to establish a relationship with schools teaching in English operating under the umbrella of a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) located in the developing country of Cambodia.

Western Australian schools looking for a cause to support as part of their service learning program could potentially help the Cambodian schools source much-needed re-conditioned computers for Cambodian students if the program were to involve school excursions to Cambodia.

The *Opportunities of Development thru Art (ODA)* is a registered NGO with the Cambodian Government and operates eight schools registered with the local district education authority.

The *ODA* Central School (a home stay/boarding school), located in the Angkor Wat Temple precinct near the northwestern Cambodian city of Siem Reap, has an enrolment of 34 students, comprising of children from varying dysfunctional (or even desperate) situations. Students study English, art, use of computers and Khmer culture in half day sessions five days a week. Several of the older students are studying university and trades courses. Seven campuses of the central school are located in outlying villages 40-50 kilometres from Siem Reap and teach between 650 and 700 students.

As a non-profit organisation *ODA* relies on self-funding through the sale of student art works, and on donations. Sales from overseas art exhibitions also boosts funding. *ODA* is partnered with and being trained in full accounting systems and is on an annual audit path with Accounting for International Development (AfID), which is a London-based organisation (<http://www.afid.org.uk/>).

One of *ODA*'s greatest needs is for computers, particularly laptops with good batteries due to reliance on patchy solar power. Other than proficiency in English, computer skills are recognized as vital for students' access to information and as preparation for employment, which is plentiful in and around the tourism industry in the Siem Reap district.

Currently, the **City of Perth Lions Club Inc** has a Computer Restoration Program whereby restored equipment is supplied around the world to deserving organisations such as schools, orphanages and educational services. The club has already supplied over 3,000 units to worthy causes overseas.

A difficulty in sending reconditioned computers to Cambodia in bulk is that an import duty or tax is imposed on the equipment which, per unit, amounts to more than the original selling price of a new computer. Accordingly, *ODA* has suggested a way around this difficulty is for individual overseas visitors to the

school to carry in their hand luggage (ostensibly for their personal use) a laptop for delivery to the school.

Thus if any local school were to establish a relationship with *ODA* and have students visit Cambodia, each bringing a laptop, the *ODA* schools would be able to acquire the computers donated by the City of Perth Lions Club.

Further information about *ODA* and its schools can be found at:
www.odaopportunitiescambodia.org.

Schools interested in establishing a relationship with the *ODA* should contact the school coordinator, an Australian volunteer, Ms Shirley Hawe, whose email is: admin@odaopportunitiescambodia.org or shirleyhawe@gmail.com.

For information about procurement of re-conditioned laptop computers from the City of Perth Lions Club, contact should be made with Mr Ronn Selby by email at ronnselby@hotmail.com.

Note: ODA's needs were raised with former principal of Penrhos College and St Stephen's School, Dr Glenda Parkin, and her husband, Bronte Parkin, formerly of the Department of Education Services, when they visited the ODA school in Siem Reap last October. Glenda and Bronte asked if this request from ODA could be publicised in the AISWA Bulletin.