

Report of an exploratory mission trip to Cambodia – October 2013



Motivation: During the last 2 years Mart-Jan and Talitha van der Maas have had a growing interest in evangelism and Church planting with a focus on Cambodia. Responding to a sense of the Lord's calling eventually requires concrete action. In 2012 they stopped their jobs and registered for a one year mission training at a WEC Bible school in Holland. Talitha is a trained nurse and Mart-Jan worked as a project manager. The reason for this short trip to Cambodia was to seek confirmation from the Lord about where, how and with whom to work in Cambodia.

Background: Cambodia is a country about 1/3 the size of France. For close to a Century it was a French Protectorate. Since its independence in 1953 it has lived 20 years of violence: the Vietnam War (1970-75), the Marxist Khmer Rouge genocide (1975-99) where close to 25% of the population died, followed by 10 years of civil war. There is much poverty, pain and mistrust. It is a predominantly Buddhist land. Since 1990 Christians



have been allowed to worship openly. Christians in Cambodia are now reaching 2% of the national population of 15 million.



In June 2013 Frederic Walraven and Philip Nunn met brother Loh while visiting in Myanmar. He is a Malaysian Christian who took early retirement from Shell Oil in order to devote all his time and energy to evangelism and Church planting – with a special focus on south east Asia. With the prayer and financial support from a network of Christian assemblies in Malaysia, he and his wife work at encouraging the formation of new

indigenous, self-sustaining and self-governing local churches. In Cambodia there are 7 Malaysian missionaries (2 couples and 3 single sisters) working in 3 centres. Their strategy is to work through their own NGO offering good quality English lessons: to pre-school children – which provides contact with parents and the local community, and to young people.





Impressions: We were impressed with the dedication of the Malaysian missionary teams. Learning Khmer and building relationships requires a long term investment, and it is encouraging to see that after 15 years the fruit of their labours is becoming evident. We also noticed that most Christian missions have focused their efforts on the bigger cities. Since most Cambodians live in rural areas, it is clear that at this moment Christian presence is greatly needed in rural areas. The words of the Lord Jesus clearly apply: “the harvest is plenty, but the labourers are few...” – The doors are currently wide open!

What next? We returned encouraged by the fellowship enjoyed and experiences lived with our Cambodian and Malaysian brothers and sisters. There is much to pray about. Mart-Jan & Talitha and family will be working towards moving to Cambodia and joining the team of Malaysian missionaries in the Summer of 2014. The current plan is to spend the first year or two in Phnom Penh to learn the Khmer language, and then move out into the rural area. Before moving to Cambodia, they expect the arrival of their 3rd child, and hope to work at obtaining a TESL (Teaching English as a Second language) certificate. We would value your prayers for the family Maas during this interesting year of transition.

- Mart-Jan vd Maas and Philip Nunn