**2014 FDCC Annual Report**

This is the sixth annual report for the Foundation for Developing Cambodian Communities Ltd., now trading as Cambodian Kids Can (CKC).

**FDCC achievements this year**

The past year has represented a watershed for FDCC following the obtaining of both tax concession status and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status during 2014. Tax concession status means income tax is no longer being levied on donations and other funds raised, as was previously the case, and DGR status allows the organisation to offer tax deductibility to Australian resident donors. And the income tax that had previously been paid since the date of incorporation in December, 2008 was refunded, thereby providing FDCC with a cash buffer of around one year’s operating expenses.

The DGR status now enables FDCC to more actively pursue donations and grants from corporate and philanthropic entities where tax deductibility is a particularly attractive consideration. Consequently, FDCC is well placed to not only continue with the current programs, but also give consideration to expanding into other areas that are directed at improving the lives of underprivileged and orphaned children of Prey Veng in Cambodia.

In November 2013, Marie O’Sullivan resigned as a Director after five years of service on the Board. Marie made a significant contribution during that time, both through applying her business coaching and workshop facilitation skills to enhancing the effectiveness of Board operations, but also in her fund raising activities, most notably organising very successful fund raising annual dinners. Marie continues to be a strong supporter of FDCC, and has assisted on an ad hoc basis since last November. Her contribution is certainly very much appreciated by the Directors and supporters of FDCC.

In March 2014 FDCC welcomed Eliza Lamb as a Director. Eliza has had a strong past association with FDCC and brings her a significant background of experience in the child development sector which she is actively applying to the development of individual personal development plans for each of the Mekhala House girls.

And in June 2014 Biheng Zhang joined as a Director. Bi has a wealth of experience in fund raising, and has already developed a program for FDCC to take full advantage of its newly acquired tax concession status.

Once again KPMG has provided pro bono assistance in auditing FDCC’s annual accounts and we sincerely thank Tony Batsakis of KPMG for their involvement. Additionally, we also wish to express gratitude to Joanne Clark, a volunteer and strong supporter, for her work in liaising with the auditors and preparing the annual financial report.

**FDCC membership drive and fundraising activities**

As at 30 June 2014 FDCC had 74 members who continued to assist in supporting the work to improve the lives of many children in Cambodia. In addition, following on from the very successful annual dinner in August of this year, we now have almost 60 supporters who contribute monthly to the education of the four girls who have just commenced university this month.

The level of Australian fundraising by FDCC showed an improved result on the prior year, but also reflected the delay into the 2014 financial year of the annual fund raising dinner which had meant the 2013 fundraising figure was lower than average. And in addition to the many regular donors, FDCC also received a healthy level of donations from some individuals and corporate entities, including KOTT Gunning, a Perth-based legal firm.

The Directors would also like to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of so many volunteers who organise fundraising events for FDCC. These people are too numerous to mention, but a big thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time or donated money to ensure FDCC continues to be able to support the work in Cambodia.

As has been the case for a number of years, Cambridge University Press once again generously undertook the printing and publishing of the calendars without charge to FDCC. In the past year, in excess of $11,000 was raised from this activity. The girls at Mekhala House again took the photos for the calendar, which had the theme “A Taste of Cambodia”, and included several recipes for tasty traditional Cambodian dishes.

In addition to its fundraising focus, the Directors of FDCC also provide support to the staff in Cambodia who are responsible for running the two key projects, Mekhala House and Mekhala learning Centre. As previously mentioned, there has been a particular focus on development of individual personal development plans to pass on important life skills to the girls, including career planning. Through this process, the Mekhala House staff continue to develop their own knowledge base which will serve them well in the future.

**Mekhala House project**

All of the children of Mekhala house continue to grow and learn under the care of the committed staff in Prey Veng. For the girls still studying at primary or secondary school, learning continues to be the major focus of their time and this has been demonstrated as they continue to perform significantly above their peers at school.

During 2014, the four girls who had been studying year 12 have just commenced associate degree courses at university, with three girls electing to study accounting and the other girl undertaking a marketing degree. And the three girls who had already commenced university degrees continue to progress very well through their courses. It is especially pleasing to see evidence of their mature and confident upbringing at Mekhala house translating into university life on campus where they are involved in extra-curricular activities of a leadership nature.

Each year, our programs at Mekhala House are audited by the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs, and it is especially reassuring to report that Mekhala House is consistently ranked by the government officials as one of the best managed orphanages across Cambodia.

Significant credit and thanks must go to Sok Rady, the Director of Governance and External Relations, and all of the staff for their very strong dedication to caring for the children.

**Mekhala Learning Centre project**

The Mekhala Learning Centre (MLC) continues to provide many underprivileged children in the region with access to learning important computer and English skills. It provides them with access to learning resources for their secondary and tertiary education and also greatly enhances their future employment prospects.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that many past MLC students have successfully transitioned to meaningful employment as a resulkt of the English and computer-based skills acquired during their study at MLC. In 2015, FDCC will undertake a comprehensive survey of past students to more formally evaluate the outcomes of the MLC programs.

The MLC community library, which now houses in excess of 4,500 books and is clearly the largest in Prey Veng, receives up to 600 visitors each month, and is very well patronised.

The Morris Foundation and Cooper Investments were the key donors for the Mekhala Learning centre during the past financial year, and FDCC is very grateful to those donors for their generous support.

Under the guidance of FDCC Director, Gavin Didsbury, the data entry work project has successfully continued to undertake work for organisations in Australia, generating revenue for the MLC project as well as income for some former MLC students who perform the data entry work.

**Conclusion**

This past financial year has seen FDCC able to position itself on a much firmer financial base, thereby enhancing future opportunities to build on the already successful projects in place in Prey Veng.

The organisation is particularly indebted to the Directors of both FDCC Cambodia and FDCC Australia for making this happen, but especially to all the donors and local volunteers who support us in so many varied ways. With ongoing cooperation between Australia and Cambodia, and with everyone’s’ continued enthusiasm and support, we will continue to achieve wonderful outcomes for the Mekhala House children and the broader community of Prey Veng.

Patrick Arthur

FDCC Chairperson