

## **CAMBODIA 29, December 2013**

The most pleasant event in the last three months was the traditional Water Festival. But who is surprised that the political events overshadowed this tradition. There were parliamentary elections which were won by the party in power, but the opposition claimed victory, organized protest marches and did not turn up for the opening of parliament. After the catastrophic collapse of the bridge two years ago, the death of the elderly King and the protest gatherings after this year's elections, the Prime Minister, Hun Sen, cancelled the traditional regatta on the Tonle Sap for fear of riots. Before the elections there were many promises and much activity with which the government sought to entice the people. In the distribution of the land the people would retain their own piece of land and the road network would be upgraded. The elections are now over, the distribution of the land progresses only slowly and not much is happening with the road building programme.

In the last few months, our community of three brothers, Bernhard, Max and Pedro, have been very busy. We finally took possession of our utility vehicle which from the beginning has been called on to capacity. The transport of the sick, of animals, shopping journeys, the transport of goods, the transport of students home and other emergencies leave us wondering how we managed to cope before. At the end of one journey with students, parents and relatives showed their gratitude by inviting the brothers in for something to eat. We had dog meat. Pedro out of courtesy tasted the meat which appeared to everyone as tasty. He asked by the way where the dog came from and was told that the animal had contracted rabies and was now only fit for the cooking pot! No one apparently came to any harm but Pedro was the subject of much laughter and jokes about his health. Animals are always around us, e.g. mosquitoes. Three months ago our dog, "Sancho", suddenly disappeared. During the night amorous giant geckos chase one another right through our rooms. Twice we had a snake, and regularly in the outside toilet frogs, geckos, and – naturally – mosquitoes are to be found. On one occasion a mouse found Max's soap tasty.



In the area of our missionary work we have been able to complete some projects. A computer room with eight new computers, a projector, printer and furniture was set up. Now each evening there are two computer classes and two English classes. The project to

upgrade the toilet facilities in the Hostel is complete. We have built four new toilets with water and electricity while behind the kitchen we have a new roofed-over washroom with four sinks. The old ladder in the hostel has been removed and replaced by a covered outside stairway. Likewise the small Bunong hostel now has a computer and a toilet. In the garden near the hostel there is a small fishpond; ducks on occasion have also found welcome there. As you can see, a lot is going on. Our Oreang project is still a long way off. When we go about things in an orderly manner, i.e. when we work together with the authorities, then progress is slow. We could of course take the conventional way and move things along with bribes, but we do not want to encourage corruption. So we need a lot of time and patience.



Since our sector has been upgraded to a District we have a new leader and a new council or advisory team. Some changes have become necessary. Personnel have been changed and some houses closed or changes made to them. The most radical change for Sen Monorom is that Brother Pedro will leave us in December as he returns to Argentina to complete his studies. He will be spending three years studying Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. Until his eventual return to Cambodia, Max and I will be responsible for everything. It remains to be seen if we will find a replacement.

Towards the end of 2013 we put together our budget for the coming year. Our apostolate is also tied to a budget. I give you a short summary for the last 18 months in Sen Monorom:

**INCOME**

Donations from the Missionsverein, Donations from other Countries and miscellaneous Donations	<b>€ 50,370</b>
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**EXPENDITURE**

Administration (Wages; Office Supplies; Travel)	€ 3,349
Community (Furniture; Provisions; Garden tools; Cleaning Materials; Domestic Animals; Repairs)	€ 3,985

Teaching (Computer Accessories; Books; Writing Materials; Tutoring)	€ 339
Quality of Life (Culture; Gifts; Holidays; Doctor; Medicines; Sport, Outings)	€ 380
Special Projects (New Toilet; Computer; Wages; Staircase; Washroom; Vehicle; Fish Pond; Bed Frames; Desks; Chairs)	€ 21,063
Total	€ 29,261
Outstanding payments to end of 2013	€ 9,754
31 December 2013:	<b>€ 39,015</b>

Together with the donations we expect from the Missionsverein we can plan for the coming year.

To all our donors, friends and helpers who have so generously supported our work we say a big thank you and may God reward you and *Arkun cheran* particularly on behalf of the sick, the youth and the needy Bunong population. It is really amazing that we are able to work in this way with no assurance that the money will always flow in. The loving God looks after us through individuals and organizations. I point out here that generally private donations are extremely generous. Small donations have their own value (cf Lk 21:1-4). On this occasion several organizations have made it possible for us to acquire our much needed vehicle, and the computers with their accessories: the Diocese of Speyer, the DOK, Porticus and the “Monks” of the Limburgerhof church choir.

We are now into the dry season which means little rain, relatively low temperatures (20 overnight and hardly 30 during the day) and an environment which does not exactly evoke for us Advent and Christmas. We wish you all a very good time and *chum rieb lie* from

*Bongpro* Bernhard, Max, Pedro

