



## THE POWER IN THEIR HANDS

**STEVE and LISA are learning how to use their skills to empower the Khmer in physical and spiritual restoration.**

Pictures:

Steve and Tok and their children

Steve talks physio techniques with his students

Steve and Lisa with Joel, Emma and Noah  
(photos: West-Newmans)

In a physiotherapy clinic in Cambodia, Global Interaction cross-cultural worker Steve was treating the wife of a local pastor under the keen eye of a talented young Khmer physiotherapist named Tok. The clinic serves as a training ground for Khmer physiotherapists keen to further develop their skills. That day, it also served as fertile ground for spiritual discussion. As they chatted **Tok piped up, “I’m a Christian too!” Then he corrected himself, “Well, not yet.”**

Afterwards Steve spoke to Tok alone, wanting to know what he had meant by his earlier statement. Realising that Tok wanted to become a follower of Jesus, Steve prayed with him while the angels rejoiced.

Exhilarated, Steve returned home from work. Only a couple of months into his job working to improve the skills of Cambodian physiotherapists, he could have been forgiven for thinking that, apart from language learning, this “missionary” work is easy.

In one way it is easy to gain converts amongst the Khmer. One organisation reports that each time it shows the Jesus film at its mobile medical clinics, a large number of people are saved. Other organisations providing jobs and shelter to women at risk also report high conversion rates. Sadly, the reality is that once the medical clinic has passed on or the job has ended, many abandon their new faith to return to their Buddhist customs.

A board member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia (the representative body for Cambodian churches) has commented, **“The message of Jesus has not yet grabbed the Khmer heart.”** It would take time to see if Tok’s confession of faith actually grabbed his heart.

Tok’s faith journey started when he was a teenager. His nominally Buddhist parents had briefly attended church as a result of visitors who shared about Jesus. Busy making ends meet, their church

attendance floundered. However, Tok was struck by how much Christians loved and cared for each other. He decided that one day he would “become a member of that society.”

So, Steve was merely the welcoming committee. He gave Tok a Bible and referred him to a local church. Having lived in the country less than two years, Steve did not have the language ability to adequately teach Biblical concepts to Tok. After a few more years and some hard lessons, **Steve now believes that he is not the best person to be teaching young believers how to follow Jesus in a distinctly Khmer way. “That is the job of the Holy Spirit and the local church,” he reflects.**

By referring new Christians to the local church, Steve and others like him are giving Khmer Christians the opportunity to disciple their own people and grow themselves in the process. Steve’s job was to pray ... a lot.

However, as Steve prayed, Tok seemed to only get busier with his work and study. It was a dry period for Steve. He was praying without any fruit, without news of progress. He was busy too with a second group of physiotherapists keen to build their skills through the course, but sadly with little interest in spiritual matters. Then Tok and Steve were forced to go their separate ways. Tok was privileged to be one of five physiotherapists selected to study a further six months in Singapore. At the same time, Steve and his family left for six months home assignment in Australia. **He could do nothing for Tok but pray for the Holy Spirit to do His work.**

Upon returning to Cambodia, Steve was staggered to hear that two more physiotherapists had also become Christians while the group was in Singapore. All the students had attended weekly church services with the director of the training program. One had been progressively healed of



chronic chest pain through prayer. Tok also shared how God had answered his prayers for his family. He had even tried to explain his faith to his wife and family elders.

Now, Steve meets with Tok as a friend, physiotherapy mentor, fellow father and brother in Jesus. They talk about things of faith, but Steve is always careful to point him back to the word of God, encouraging Tok to seek out the answers for himself. Tok recently asked Steve to choose a name from the Bible for his next child. Instead, Steve encouraged Tok to read the stories of various Bible characters and choose the name of the one he admires most.

Tok is still very busy. He, with the other top graduates, is currently preparing to run the theoretical training for the physiotherapy upgrade course for the first time ever. It's the first small step towards the Cambodian physiotherapists being equipped to bring healing and hope to their own people. Steve aims to do himself out of a job.

Despite his busyness, Tok has found a church close to home and is attending regularly. His conversations hold a greater understanding of the Bible and issues of faith. **Sometimes progress seems slow but Steve continues to pray patiently, knowing that real transformation takes time.**

Many people have wondered quietly, and not-so-quietly, why Global Interaction has sent a physiotherapist to Cambodia rather than a church planter. For Steve and his wife Lisa, it has been a matter of simple obedience to the call of God on their lives. Some cross-cultural workers, like Barry "Peace Bridges" Higgins, have skills directly useful for strengthening the Cambodian church. Steve's physiotherapy skills perhaps don't as directly impact and strengthen the local church (unless treating numerous church leaders and giving them

strengthening exercises counts). **Nevertheless, each member of the Global Interaction team in Cambodia is using their gifts and professional skills to empower Khmer people to develop their own distinctive ways of following Jesus.**

For the Khmer, there is no question as to Steve and Lisa's presence in Cambodia. Christians help people. This is the simple outworking of faith and it is a powerful witness to those who are yet to believe. It is also an example for those like Tok who are already members of the Christian "society".

This kind of empowerment is the key mission of the Global Interaction team in Cambodia.

**LISA  
Cambodia**

## PROJECT PROFILE

### Medical items

*Project Code: CMwe415*

Cambodia has one of the world's highest rates of disability. Steve trains physiotherapists in a clinic which provides free treatment. Your support can help pay for medical tests, equipment, transport, medication or even an operation for someone who can't afford to pay. For example:

X-ray - \$7.35  
Transport to and from clinic - \$2.90  
Wheelchair - \$175

Project Value: \$13,000

*Gifts to this project are tax-deductible*

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