Press file

AUSTRALIAN AID
FOR CAMBODIA FUND

Maharishi Vedic University – Cambodia

Achievements 1991-1996

1991

June — **Australian Aid for Cambodia Fund formed.** Objectives: to bring peace to Cambodia; to help rebuild Cambodia by providing health care and education facilities.

July — **First Visit to Cambodia:** AACF team meets Cambodian Government

July-December — **Fundraising:** First AACF fundraising campaign raises $300,000

November — **Official Recognition:** AACF delegation of Steve Griffith and Dr Bevan Morris visits Cambodia and signs joint venture agreement with Cambodian Government to build and operate Maharishi Vedic University and hospital in remote Kamchai Mea village in the eastern province of Prey Veng.

AACF Chairman, Steve Griffith, meets with the Supreme Patriarch of Buddhism for Cambodia, Samdech Breah Sangharaja Tep Vong, who also visited the founder of MVU, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in Holland.

December — **AACF sends Indian doctors**-experts in Ayurveda, the ancient Vedic system of natural medicine-who treat 200,000 patients in Phnom Penh and Kampong Cham province over a six-month period.

1992

January — **AACF legally established** in Australia as a Trust, with WPECA as Trustee.

February — **Fundraising:** AACF fundraising campaign for student sponsorship begun in five States.

March — **Construction:** Construction of roads, wells, and buildings commences on site; supervised by AACF volunteer builders and engineers from Australia.

Official Recognition: Dr Byron Rigby, representing AACF, signs accord with the Vice Minister of Education, His Excellency Ek Sam Ol.

May — **MVU Faculty:** Four French teachers arrive-Jean-Michel & Monique Boudigues, Jean-Luc Darrigade and Gildas Le Masson.

June — **Fundraising:** AACF celebrity auction at Regent Hotel, Sydney, with Vince Sorrenti, Jeanne Little, Anthony Ackroyd, Paul Mercurio and Eric Grothe raises $33,000.

August — **Enrolling Students:** French volunteers give lectures on MVU to 1000 students at the Ministry of Education in Prey Veng City.

October — **MVU Faculty:** Arrival of Dr Lee and Anna Fergusson as the founding Rectors of the university. Together with the French team, they begin a series of official meetings and gain support from government leaders; the Minister of Culture, Vice Minister of Finance, Minister of Trade, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vice Minister of Health, Rector of the University of Phnom Penh, Director of the Institute of Economic Science, and Vice Rector of the University of Fine Arts.

November — **Enrolling Students:** Cambodian Government sponsors nationwide radio & TV ad campaign inviting students to apply for MVU.

Enrolling Students: 4000 MVU application forms given out to prospective students; 550 students selected from 19 of Cambodia's 22 provinces.

Construction: MVU Assembly Hall, the largest building of it's kind in the province, requires a major logistics exercise in bringing steel girders up the Mekong river from Saigon, and a crane from Phnom Penh.

Official Recognition: AACF Chairman Steve Griffith, and His Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of Cambodia, update the Joint Venture Agreement recognising AACF as a Non-Government Organisation (NGO)

December — **VIP Visit:** The Chairman of National Assembly, His Excellency Samdech Chea Sim, makes televised visit to MVU and the hospital. "On behalf of my Government, my Party and my country, I want to sincerely thank the teachers of this university who have come to help rebuild education in this country."

MVU Faculty: First Khmer faculty recruited - agronomist Oen Sophoan, later appointed as Dean of the MVU Faculty of Agriculture

1993

January

First Year: MVU opens with 550 students, 70% of whom are orphans.

VIP Visit: Former Vice Prime Minister of Cambodia visits MVU. "We are so proud of this university. The Australian organisation that has funded MVU has fulfilled its promises and displayed its commitment in an atmosphere where many governments and funding bodies talk, but few achieve."

February

Official Recognition: Supreme Council of Ministers of the State of Cambodia formally decrees the creation of Maharishi Vedic University - law No 17.

MVU Hospital: Opens, providing free medical care to up to 100 local villagers a day.

April

VIP Visit: AACF hosts a tour of MVU and Angkor Wat by international guests.

May

MVU Faculty: Arrival of new MVU Rectors, Professors Robert and Susan Brown.

July

End of First Year: 450 students graduate from the first Preparatory Year.

August

MVU Faculty: Adelaide Agricultural Scientist, Frances Mowling, visits to teach Permaculture (a method of sustainable agriculture) to students and local farmers, and to establish campus food gardens.

August-September

MVU Runs Summer Holiday Programs: In Permaculture, Natural Medicine and Cambodia's first TM Teacher Training Course.

August-October

Construction: Building of a new administration block and new faculty and student accommodation.

November

Second Year: MVU reopens for second year - 150 new students enrol for the preparatory year, bringing student numbers to 600. Second year students commence their four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture, Preventive Medicine and Management.

1994

February

MVU Faculty: Dr David Hill & Mr Gildas Le Masson are appointed Co-Rectors of MVU. New Khmer faculty appointed, including Dr Chel Sarim (medical doctor), Chhom Rada (medical assistant), Mom Sitha (maths), Un Sinoch (biology).

March

Research at MVU: The first of Dr Lee Fergusson's four papers on MVU students is published in a US journal, College Student Journal. Other papers have been subsequently published in the Journal of Instructional Psychology (1995), and the Higher Education Research and Development (1996).

May

Official Recognition: The Council of Ministers of the Cambodian Government formally approves the MVU curriculum.

Research Grant: Dr David Hill, Co-Rector of MVU, and Dr Vasant Chile, MVU Professor of Medicine, are awarded a US$10,000 grant by the Cambodian Environment Advisory Team (a UN-funded agency) to conduct research on medicinal plants.

Sport: MVU student Minh Bunly receives Sport Scholarship for study tour of France.

May-June

Media Coverage: Articles on AACF appear in the Adelaide Advertiser, the Mosman Daily, the Manly Daily, the Parramatta Advertiser, Smaradey Khmer, and Mode.

June

Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, His Excellency John Holloway, in a report to Canberra, states "very little aid, except from some of the most intrepid NGO's, is found in rural areas."

July

End of Second Year: MVU graduation and awards ceremony.

Equipment: First container load of donated equipment arrives from Sydney bringing computers, over 200 text books, writing paper and pens, medical supplies, office equipment, blankets, motorbikes, etc.

September

Official Recognition: Former Cambodian Minister of Education, now Foreign Minister, His Excellency Ung Huot, visits Australia and publicly thanks AACF supporters. "MVU is unique in many ways and is offering a very great opportunity for many hundreds of young people who would otherwise have no likelihood of tertiary education."

VIP Visit: Bulgarian Ambassador to Cambodia visits MVU and comments, "Your efforts to help Cambodia to rebuild its society and to ensure peace are praiseworthy and deserve constant help."

November

Third Year: His Excellency Ung Huot, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mr Steve Griffith, host the official opening of the library and the third year of MVU; attended by His Excellency Tol Lah, Minister of Education; His Excellency Truong Mealy, Cambodian Ambassador to Japan; the American Ambassador His Excellency Charles Twining; the Bulgarian Ambassador His Excellency Champoev Ognyan; Provincial and Ministry officials; representatives from the Australian and British diplomatic missions, the UN and the media.

Equipment: The South Australian Government donates computer and office equipment to AACF.

1995

January — **Official Recognition**: The Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly, His Excellency Son Soubert, together with General Si Suntech of the Ministry of Defence, represent Cambodia at a conference on Invincibility and Defence held in Vlodrop, Holland where they meet with MVU founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

February — **Official Recognition**: Meeting with His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, with the King's expressions of support for MVU broadcast on national radio and television.

VIP Visits to MVU: Inspections by the Chairman of the National Assembly, His Excellency Samdech Chea Sim and the Vice-Prime Minister and Co-Minister of the Interior, His Excellency Sar Kheng. The Minister of Health, His Excellency Dr Chhea Thang inspected the MVU hospital and expressed his full support for the development and use of traditional medicine in Cambodia.

MVU Faculty: Professor Oen Sophoan, Dean of the MVU Faculty of Agriculture, visits Australia to attend a conference on sustainable agriculture in South Australia and speaks to AACF supporters and members of the local Cambodian community in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.

Media Coverage: Radio Australia's Cambodian language service broadcasts the first of several pieces on MVU.

March — **Cambodian Heritage**: A UN archaeologist and expert on ancient Khmer inscriptions, Dr Long Seam, comes to MVU to seek help in translating from Sanskrit a recently found 6th century stone tablet.

April — **Construction**: Thirteen new student dormitories are completed, each able to accommodate 40 students.

Research at MVU: MVU's Dr Vasant Chile and Dr David Hill address an international conference on traditional medicine in Hanoi. Dr Chile and Dr Hill have completed a research project on medicinal plants funded by the UN Development Program.

June-August — **Media Coverage**: Articles on AACF in the West Australian, Diamond Valley News, Heidleberger, and Power Equipment.

July — **Official Recognition**: Cambodian Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Chheang Vun, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs attend a handover ceremony at AACF headquarters in Melbourne to receive, on behalf of the Cambodian people, over $45,000 of equipment donated by Australian companies.

August — **MVU Students conduct rural surveys** funded by the European Union on agricultural production and village industries.

September — **MVU Faculty**: Volunteers from Adelaide, Frances Mowling and Susan Gunter, prepare a proposal to the European Union for funding MVU agricultural extension projects.

October — **Equipment**: Second container load of donated equipment arrives from Melbourne bringing computers, textbooks, a diesel generator, water pumps, irrigation equipment, motorbikes, and medical supplies.

Grant: The New Zealand Government provides a grant to MVU for a project to train village midwives and reduce infant mortality in the local area.

November — **Fourth year**: The university begins its fourth year with 130 new students bringing the total student number to 650

1996

January — **Official Support**: The Cambodian Government together with local villagers donate 80 hectares of land to MVU to be developed as a model farm.

February — **VIP Visit**: President of AACF's new Board of Governors, Professor David Cubbin, visits Cambodia and meets with Government and academic leaders.

Management Training: AACF begins the first of its Management Training courses in Phnom Penh teaching practical management skills to Government officials, funded by the European Union.

Health Programs: MVU establishes a community health outreach clinic to provide primary health care in remote Prey Thom Commune

April — **Cambodian Heritage**: In collaboration with UNESCO and the Cambodian Government, AACF commences teaching Sanskrit to Buddhist monks in Phnom Penh.

Fundraising: AACF Car Raffle raises $27,000.

May — Official Recognition: AACF hosts a cocktail party in Melbourne for the Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Ung Huot.

June — **Grant**: AACF is accepted into the AusAID/NGO Cooperation Program and is granted funding for a village health clinic training program to be run by AACF in association with WHO. (AusAID is the Australian Government aid agency.)

Official Support: The Vice-Prime Minister and Co-Minister of the Interior, His Excellency Sar Kheng, builds a new classroom block at MVU.

Official Support: The Cambodian Government

1996 July

announces that it will invest up to US$160,000 in new academic buildings at MVU over the following 12 months.

Equipment: A shipment of lab equipment is sent to Cambodia to equip the laboratory at the MVU hospital. The equipment was donated by 19 Victorian secondary schools.

Fundraising: AACF 5th Anniversary Dinner in Sydney, attended by the Cambodian Ambassador, His Excellency Chheang Vun, raises $24,000.

Messages of Support from the Royal Government of Cambodia

His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, December 1994 (translated from Khmer)

"I would like to thank you very heartily for educating our young Khmers and I am truly impressed with your dedication and that of the personnel of the university."

His Excellency Ung Huot, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

"On this occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Australian Aid for Cambodia Fund, I would like to wish you all the best. We in Cambodia appreciate you very much. I'm speaking on behalf of the students—the poor, the orphans—who are now studying at Maharishi Vedic University in Kamchai Meas, which is funded and assisted by AACF.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, as Foreign Minister of Cambodia, I would like to say thank you very much for all your efforts and wish you all the very best in your ventures, especially in your assistance to AACF. This means assistance to the kids of Cambodia. You are assisting the future of Cambodia. Thank you very, very much."

His Excellency Tol Lah, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport

"On behalf of the Ministry of Education of the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, I would like to congratulate the Australian Aid for Cambodia Fund on the auspicious celebration of the fifth year since its inauguration.

AACF and the Ministry of Education together have pioneered a partnership to bring education to the remostest and poorest region of Cambodia, that is Prey Veng province. Our country is once again rebuilding its education after 20 years of war. This is the future of our country, the development of our youth.

Thank you—thank you all for helping our country."

His Royal Highness Prince Sisowoth, Minister of Rural Development

"After 20 years, Cambodia is trying to redefine itself. We have lost everything, including our whole education system.

I think that the work of the MVU team has been fantastic. Our young Cambodians need to find their place in an internationally recognised framework and to move away from their uninformed way of thinking, and more toward a reasoned and peaceful way of thinking.

The work of the University at Kamchai Meas is most important for us. It is of prime importance that our Australian friends should continue to support financially, and also with all other means at your disposal, the work of the MVU team in this University and all its activities in Cambodia."

AUSTRALIAN AID
FOR CAMBODIA FUND

PO Box 81, Bundoora, Vic 3083
Tel: (03) 9467 5977 Fax: (03) 9467 5200
Internet address: http://www.vicnet.net.au/~NaturalLaw/aacf