



## Cambodian Adventure Issue

- **A shoebox and a softened heart**—HAP secretary Vera Sytch shares a powerful moment from Cambodia when God used a simple gift to remind her why we serve.
- **Chicken Coop for the Soul**—Pastor's dream of building a chicken coop to provide eggs, meat, and teach valuable skills to the children.

Hands Across the Pacific (H.A.P.) is a 501c3 Christian mission organization dedicated to sharing Christ's love with those in need in Cambodia. We partner with local churches to support widows, orphans, and communities. Run by volunteers, all donations go directly to helping Cambodian families and spreading the gospel. To donate, go to [handsacrossthepacific.com](https://handsacrossthepacific.com) and click the DONATE tab, or send checks to:

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## A Moment That Melted My Heart

by Vera Sytch

After years of serving on mission trips in some of the world's most poverty-stricken places, I sometimes worry my heart has grown a little too tough. When you've seen hunger, heartache, and hopelessness up close for so long, it's easy to build emotional armor just to keep going. But God—so gentle and faithful—always finds a way to break through.

And this time, it happened in the most unexpected place.

We had been running nonstop for over a week in Cambodia when Pastor Sina invited us to a remote village outside Kampong Chhnang. A small church there was distributing *Operation Christmas Child* shoeboxes. To be honest, I wasn't excited to go. I was tired and bracing for chaos—screaming kids, noise, disorder. But what I found instead was something deeply beautiful.

We arrived just as the church service was ending. Outside, about 150 children sat quietly on woven mats laid out on the red, dusty ground—lined up neatly by age and gender. Their parents stood patiently behind them. The atmosphere wasn't chaotic—it was reverent.

Pastor Sina shared the gospel with the children and their parents, most of whom don't yet know Christ. Then came the shoeboxes. Carefully, joyfully, the local church leaders began to pass out the gifts. But what amazed me was that not a single child tore into their box. They simply held them, waiting.

Then Pastor Sina gave the signal: "You may open your boxes—for ten seconds!" The lids flew open and eyes sparkled. Just as quickly, the lids shut again. It was a joyful, orderly moment of delight. A few minutes later, they were allowed another peek.

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As I walked around soaking in the moment and taking photos, one little girl caught my eye. She sat next to her father as they gently opened her box together. Inside were small, simple gifts—some clothes, a stuffed animal—nothing extravagant. But the father was overwhelmed. He kept bowing to me and thanking me as if I had given the gift myself. I was completely undone.

Tears filled my eyes. I turned away so the others wouldn't see me crying. Because in that moment, I was struck by a deep truth: These families, with so little, were

overflowing with gratitude. And back home? We often have so much... and yet still feel empty.

That day, my heart—tired and calloused—was softened again. God used a shoebox and a father's humble gratitude to remind me why we serve.

Please continue to pray for these beautiful children and their families. Their joy, their dignity, and their hunger for hope inspire us to keep going. And with your help, *Hands Across the Pacific* will continue showing up—bringing the love of Jesus to places where it's needed most. ✝



## A Journey to Remember: Caring for Orphans in Cambodia

One of the most unforgettable moments of our two-week trip to Cambodia came when Pastor Sina took us on a ferry ride across the beautiful Tonlé Sap River. The sun was low, casting a golden glow over the water as we made our way to a small village where we had the privilege of visiting an orphanage. But this wasn't just any orphanage—it was the home of Pastor Deam Vat and his wife, who had opened their hearts and their home to 16 orphaned children.

As we arrived, I could see that this wasn't a typical facility. This was a place filled with life, laughter, and love. Pastor Deam, with a bright smile and gentle spirit, shared his story with us. He told us about the challenges the children faced, including one old bicycle that was used to get them to school miles away. Sadly, it had broken down and was beyond repair.

As we talked, Pastor Deam's eyes lit up when he shared a dream he had: to build a chicken coop. Not only would it provide fresh eggs and meat for the children, but it would also teach them a valuable skill—raising chickens. Having raised chickens myself for over 12 years, I immediately felt a deep connection to this vision. I loved the idea of these kids learning the responsibility and rewards of caring for animals.

Before we left the orphanage, we decided to contribute to this dream. We donated money for a new bicycle and the materials to start building the chicken coop. But what happened next took me completely by surprise.

Just a few days later, while I was still in Cambodia, I received a message with photos. To my amazement, not one, but two brand new bicycles had arrived for the children! The materials for the

chicken coop were already on-site, and the construction had begun. A few days later, I saw photos of the coop's frame taking shape. And by the time my plane landed back home, I received a final picture—a fenced-in area surrounding the coop, complete with chickens!

I was floored. What had started as a small donation had been transformed into something truly life-changing for these children in a matter of days! It was incredible to witness how quickly and efficiently the funds were put to work, and it filled my heart with joy to see the fruits of generosity.

This experience reminded me of how powerful even the smallest actions can be. The dream of a chicken coop was no longer just a dream: it was a reality. And that reality will continue to bring hope, joy, and sustenance to the children in Pastor Deam's care for years to come. ✝

