



The Voice Published by 3-in-1 Publishing © 2009 3-in-1 logo designed & created by LCH Creative Multimedia © 2009 all rights reserved



The
Ratanak
Foundation

Bringing Life
to the Killing Fields of Cambodia

The Child's Voice

ISSUE ONE

THE RATANAK FOUNDATION

Focusing on Child Exploitation

Featuring

- About The ~~Ratanak~~ Foundation
- Mobilising the Church
- Exclusive Interview – Steve Norman – Dir UK
- Report – Willowfield Parish Church, Belfast
- How can I help?
- Editor's Blog

Ratanak

Giving hope to the hopeless

HISTORY

Ratanak means precious gem in Khmer. In this case, Ratanak was a little girl who, in 1989, died because there was no medicine available to save her life. The Ratanak Foundation is dedicated to preventing such needless suffering and death in Cambodia.

Brian McConaghy, Founding Director of the Ratanak Foundation, was a Forensic Scientist with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for 22 years. For 19 of those years he performed his duties with the RCMP while setting up and running the Ratanak Foundation as a volunteer. Brian is a man with a burden for the people of Cambodia. Having grown up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Brian knows what it is to live under the stress of political turmoil.



BRIAN MCCONAGHY FOUNDER/DIR

Brian first visited Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand in 1989. What he witnessed there appalled him. This experience led him into Cambodia several months later to find conditions were worse than in the camps. This was the start of a long journey that has taken Brian and the Ratanak Foundation through many challenging and rewarding times in their desire to be servants of the Khmer people.

After visiting Cambodian refugee camps and seeing a documentary on Cambodia, Brian was moved to study the complexities of this country and to do something to alleviate the suffering. The result was a foundation named after a little girl he saw dying in that documentary.

Brian never got to meet Ratanak but she changed his life. His dedication to the people of Cambodia is a reflection of the person of Jesus Christ at work in his life.

RATANAK UK

In April 2008, Steve Norman, a Police Officer of 24 years, chanced upon an article in a Sunday newspaper supplement about a girl sold into prostitution at the age of 13. The next day he bought the book and read it through that night into the next day. It was through this experience that God broke his heart and placed therein a deep compassion for the children of Cambodia who have no voice and endure such unimaginable suffering. The overwhelming desire to engage in this issue was impressed on him.

In September 2009 Steve travelled to Cambodia where he was able to meet the Ratanak partners and see first



PICTURED ABOVE - PATRON OF
RATANAK UK STEVE CHALK MBE

hand the situations which exist. This visit cemented his resolve to work to make a difference to the lives of as many people as possible. Steve has just joined 3-in-1 The Voice and will run his own section highlighting the plight and giving updates on Ratanak.

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Sexual abuse of children is one of the most important and horrifying issues facing Cambodia today. Responding to it requires action on the part of all segments of society - police, judiciary, community leaders and organizations, and the general public. Cambodia serves as an origin, transit and destination country for the trafficking of people. The child trafficking prevention program is currently active in 13 of the 23 Cambodian provinces. To date 683 volunteer trainers are active. They have trained 21,140 community members. This program teaches dignity, self worth and community protection skills. It has been very well received throughout Cambodia and continues to expand. While never forcing any spiritual agenda, this program's desire is to see a holistic transformation of lives and to bring healing, freedom and hope through faith in Jesus Christ.

Ratanak's response is that it has a very successful ongoing program run at the community and village level now operates in most border provinces. This program works to educate, enable, and strengthen children and their families regarding the perils of trafficking. It serves to educate communities regarding the methods used by human traffickers, and there are intervention and follow up strategies for those who have already been abused or trafficked. Advocacy, speaking up for and with these children, is essential – to plant the seed of change within this country and beyond. Exponential growth in the impact of this program has been noted as a result of the dedication and good work of the trained volunteers

[Click here](#) to access Ratanak Official Website



'VOICE OF THE CHILD'
BY
STEVE NORMAN – UK DIR RATANAK

“The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice. I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.” Ezekiel 22:29 & 30 (NIV)

Overview:

The response of the Ratanak Foundation to the sexual exploitation of children focuses in three main areas. Prevention of child trafficking, Protection and rehabilitation of younger children rescued from the brothels throughout Cambodia and life skills training and mentoring for older girls trying to transition from the brothels to normal society. All our programs emphasise wholeness, physically, emotionally and spiritually in the lives of the children we serve.

Context:

The Khmer Rouge revolution and subsequent Vietnamese invasion of the 1970's and 80's left Cambodian society in tatters. There were few social, family and moral structures left standing and along with this vacuum came profound poverty. Under these circumstances, desperate parents, unable to feed their children will sometimes sell one child and use the money to care for the rest. In a culture already numbed by violence and with no real legal system in place, such children are unprotected and subject to terrible abuse and over time, this sad situation has become accepted by society. An environment where children are bought and sold, where no limits are placed on the degree of abuse and where few legal restraints exist will attract and encourage the very worst forms of human behaviour. While the moral vacuum and poverty represent major factors in contributing to child sex trafficking in Cambodia, sadly there is also a great demand for sex. This, linked to the most dangerous cause of greed, ensures no-one is going to let go of that kind of profit, unless someone takes it from them.

Child Sex Slaves... 3 words that do not belong in the same sentence and yet this unthinkable and horrible travesty not only exists but it is thriving and growing. Today, there are over 1 million children who forcibly enter the sex trade each year – 2 every second of

every day. In Cambodia, girls may be sold into sex slavery as young as five ...the “old” girls are 11-13 years old. Torture and violence are a girl's daily companions. She will be raped 6 to 10 times a day – 50 to 60 times during a weekend – by adult males who travel from all over the world to humiliate her... all this for as little as \$2 per time.

The men will take photos and videos of her terror so they can re-live the moment over and over again – openly distributing this material to impress their ‘friends’. But this girl's story remains untold. Her voice is silenced by the fear, shame and guilt that she is forced to endure. Her body is desecrated by the multitude of sexually transmitted diseases it is forced to host. She is hopeless, helpless, has no passport or papers, no identity. She has become what they want her to be – a product – a sexual commodity. If she doesn't ‘perform’ or tries to escape she is brutally beaten – sometimes to death – as an example to the others to ‘behave’ and make sure the ‘customer is satisfied’.



Two young girls cling to each other for comfort

Heavily sedated during the day and pumped full of amphetamine by night, these children are held prisoner with threats and violence. Beatings are common and considered to be all part of the ‘training’. The use of electric shocks serves as a common form of punishment.

In more recent years, the AIDS epidemic has added to the disaster. Children are now left orphaned and are sold by neighbours, friends, police officers and distant family members. Those seeking “safe sex” pursue younger and younger girls who are felt to be less diseased. Cambodian folklore teaches that an AIDS infected man can be cured by having sex with a young, “clean” virgin. The implications of such thinking are absolutely devastating. The situation is now well known world wide and so scores of international paedophiles fly into Cambodia every week to wreak their havoc and add to the suffering of these innocents. Brothels are now commonplace, young women and girls as young as five years of age are held captive to be abused on a daily basis. Many corrupt police and officials turn a blind eye and indeed are often paid by the brothels for providing protection.

Slowly but surely, inroads are being made to rescue children from the brothels, with skilled Christian

organisations leading this very dangerous work. But it has become clear that one of the biggest problems resulting from such rescues is what to do with the rescued kids. It can take 5 minutes to rescue a child from the brothel – but it can take up to 5 years to rehabilitate them. These girls remain a very valuable product to the pimps and brothel owners and they will take extreme measures to get them back, including threats, intimidation, violence and murder. There are no social services to plug the girls into; many do not remember their families and some of those that do, know that if returned they may be resold. They are traumatised, physically injured, disoriented and sadly, many feel totally dependent on, and have become 'bonded' with, those pimps that have so brutally abused them. Some have been sold across the border from Vietnam and so are considered stateless.



Steve Norman pictured with two children at risk

Such children have no concept of compassion, trust, belonging or identity. What does one do with such children? What are the long term consequences for these children? What hope do they have to live to adulthood?

Yet it is into this darkness that God is calling His people through the words from Isaiah 61:1-4 to be His light by entering into the battle against oppression, to bind up the broken hearted, to release these prisoners from the dungeons of sex trafficking, to set these captives free; to bestow on them His crown of beauty instead of ashes, to replace their spirit of despair with His garments of praise, to pour His oil of joy upon their crushed hearts so that they can become oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendour.

What will be our response...? Will we simply turn and walk away or will we be a people who will heed the call of God and stand in the gap for the children of Cambodia?

After Drug trafficking, the trafficking of human beings is now ranks alongside arms trafficking as the second most profitable crime in the world raking in a staggering \$32 billion dollars a year. How can this be? A drug dealer can sell a little bag of drugs on the street just once. An arms dealer can sell a hand gun on the street just once. A trafficker can sell a child 5, 10, 15, 20 times a day; day after day after day.

Irish orator, politician and philosopher Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797) is recorded as saying, ***“All that is***

necessary for the triumph of evil is that enough good men do nothing.”

What will YOU choose to do?

Does all this sound overwhelming? It is absolutely not for Christ – ***“For nothing is impossible for God”*** (Luke 1:37)

*

Steve Norman is available to talk in your church/organisation please contact him below at the UK address thank you. If you would like to make a donation please do so at the appropriate office and may God Bless you...

In March 2010 Ratanak UK was awarded charitable status



Prayer

Prayer is not just a nice spiritual appendage attached to the ministry of the Ratanak Foundation. Prayer is central in our work. We have always maintained that this is a work of Jesus Christ and that he ultimately runs the Ratanak Foundation. It is he who guides us and he who gives us the opportunities to assist lives lived in desperation

It is Christ that changes lives, brings hope and ministers to the hurting. We simply participate in his plan. We have a responsibility to serve as best we can, turning all our skills and talents to serving Cambodia, but we are simply the workers. The changing of lives is not about us - that is Christ's work.

So if we are to serve him we need to be in communication with him, following his lead, being refreshed by him when exhausted, pleading for the lives we encounter and giving him all the thanks and praise when doors open and we know success

To that end we are always interested in people who want to pray for us and for Cambodia. Several prayer groups have started. If you are interested in starting such a group please contact

one of the the Ratanak Foundation Reps who will provide you with further information regarding getting on our prayer notification list.

Please also take time to pray through the information in our latest newsletter posted on this site. [Access our latest newsletter here.](#)

If you have been affected by any of the issues today and want to help please contact

Ratanak Canada



The Ratanak Foundation
Box 521-3495 Cambie Street
Vancouver, BC. V5Z 4R3
Canada

Phone: 1-604-325-9300

Email: info@ratanak.org

[ONLINE CONTACT FORM](#)

Ratanak UK



Ratanak UK
PO Box 167 Thirsk
North Yorkshire. YO7 9A4
United Kingdom

Phone: 07545 887697

Email: ratanakUK@ratanak.org

[ONLINE CONTACT FORM](#)

Ratanak USA



USA donors please contact:
Elijah Foundation
PO Box 934
Palatine, IL. 60078
USA

Phone: 1-604-325-9300

Email: info@ratanak.org

[ONLINE CONTACT FORM](#)