

Announcing health internships from “SiRCHEsi” NGO in Siem Reap, Cambodia. An intensive, 2-week researcher/practitioner ”full-immersion” course for small groups of 2-4.

Next intakes: Feb 17—Mar 5, 2013 April 14- 30, 2013; August 19- Sept 4, 2013.



Citoyen(ne)s de Siem Reap pour la Santé, de l'Éducation et les Questions Sociales

Cambodian Registered NGO # 704

SiRCHEsi and the Community Health Challenges in Siem Reap

SiRCHEsi (**Siem Reap Citizens for Health, Educational and Social Issues**) is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political, non-governmental organization (**NGO**) formed in Cambodia in 2000. Its history and latest newsletters can be found at www.angkorwatngo.com. For the past decade, SiRCHEsi has provided the Siem Reap community with research-driven health programs, supported by research grants, the selling of Cambodian fair trade items, corporate and private donations, and currently, paid student internships.

Because Siem Reap is located next to the Ankor Wat temples, the focus of Cambodia's tourism industry, the great influx of visitors have introduced new infections such as HIV/AIDS, adding to the endemic tropical illnesses (malaria, tuberculosis, Dengue fever). As tourism numbers increase--currently 3 million--- the combination of sexual tourists, local men's non-monogamous behaviour, and poverty-driven sex work all have contributed to the rise in rates for HIV/AIDS and STIs. By 2000, for example, Siem Reap Province's HIV/AIDS prevalence rates were among the highest in the country, while Cambodia had the highest rates in South-East Asia-- 42% of brothel-based sex-workers HIV+ and 20% of beer-sellers.

At the start of the new Millenium, SiRCHEsi, as a small, local, community-based NGO, first began confronting HIV/AIDS, in tune with many of the Millennium Development Goals. SiRCHEsi has used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, defining our activities with input from various community stakeholders including concerned citizens, business people, persons from high risk groups, and community health and medical workers. At the same time, government, international agencies, and other NGOs all ramped up their research and intervention programs against HIV/AIDS, under the co-ordination of the Provincial AIDS Office, whose Director, Dr.Sarath Kros, MD, MSc, also served as part time Program Director for SiRCHEsi (2003-12); he now directs the Provincial Health Department.

Today, after more than a decade of successful work in the field is correlated with lower prevalence rates, SiRCHEsi's staff can share their health delivery and research skills and knowledge, and mentor, one-on-one, students and interns interested in seeing, up close and personal, the workings of health systems in a resource-challenged, developing country.

SiRCHESI's INTENSIVE INTERNSHIPS

In a short, intense 14-day period (with 3 day local culture pre-orientation), up to 4 students at a time will participate in a series of modules involving hands-on field research, health interventions, hospital visits, interviews with health administrators/policy makers, observation of/participation in rural village outreach health programs, and visits to other relevant NGO programs. Much of SiRCHESI's research/intervention expertise is in the area of reproductive health, the community response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, STIs, mid-wifery, alcohol abuse, workplace violence and prevention of trafficking of women and children. As well, additional work is carried on by our public health and NGO colleagues confronting malaria, TB, Dengue Fever, etc. Visits to other NGOs involving Poverty Reduction, HAART distribution, Tuberculosis rural outreach, child protection, and gender equity and human rights advocacy, as well as to trade unions, can also be arranged.

With long-time Part-time Director Dr Sarath Kros, MD, MSc recently promoted to Director of the Siem Reap Provincial Health Department-- managing all health services, hospitals, health centres and health personnel in the Province and oversees NGO co-ordination and government policy implementation. SiRCHESI will elect its next Program Director in April, 2013, at its "Annual General Meeting". Mr Hav Hou, Financial Officer, Statistical and IT Specialist,, is currently the "acting part-time director". He supervises 5 other part-time health workers/ educators, and 23 peer-educator outreach workers (with 5 additional trained part-time "interviewers"). Over the past 13 years, SiRCHESI and its public health colleagues have provided valuable educational experiences in Siem Reap to 25 students/interns from 6 countries-- with 6 coming back for a second time. There were also two year-long Australian volunteers who taught English in SiRCHESI's literacy and career training program (2006-2008). All have impacted the SiRCHESI local staff, training them in systematic health research, statistics, promotion and dissemination skills. In addition, numerous multi-authored conference presentations and research papers, as well as 5 theses, evolved from these students' and interns' stays (see <http://www.fairtradebeer.com>). In 2012, SiRCHESI launched the formal internship program, and three Australian students in public health and global development attended. In 2013, 12 student interns are awaited, in small working groups of 2-4. The SiRCHESI staff, and at least one international academic advisor, will now transfer back to the visiting interns, all the experience, skills and local understanding they acquired in the past decade of active health research and intervention. SiRCHESI has, from the outset, helped build local capacity in Siem Reap, working alongside colleagues from the Provincial AIDS Office, Provincial Health Department and other agencies. SiRCHESI also has linked itself to international resources, inviting researchers /practitioner experts to confront locally-defined community health challenges -- initially, HIV/AIDS prevention, women's illiteracy, poverty, and gender inequity, to which were added, as the project progressed, the prevention of alcohol abuse, workplace violence, and child trafficking and predation.

Current SiRCHESI Health Promotion programs:

SiRCHESI uses a multi-sectorial, multi-disciplinary approach to community health-promotion, through Participatory Action Research (PAR). This involves:

- i) annual behavioural interviewing and VCCT monitoring of 4 risk groups (2001-13);
- ii) active local and rural health outreach by peer educators (targeting more than 12,000 contacts in 2012);
- iii) health workshops for several hundred beer-sellers and young souvenir vendors annually;
- iv) workplace health and safety monitoring with interviews and breathalyzer testing ;

v) an NGO Annual Meeting where research and intervention priorities are set for the coming year by a gathering of SiRCHESEI staff and stakeholders. In addition,
vi) as part of a “primary” prevention, in 2006, SiRCHESEI founded a school to facilitate long-term, financially secure career paths for 26 women in the safer, healthier workplaces of large hotels. SiRCHESEI continues to monitor their career, social and family progress into 2013;
vii) SiRCHESEI’s focussed efforts are co-ordinated with government epidemiological surveillance surveys and the collaborative prevention and treatment programs of the public health service, NGOs and hospitals.
As well, viii) SiRCHESEI has strengthened health promotion infra-structure through its “**hybrid model of capacity building**”. Elizabeth Kirkwood (2009) has recently evaluated SiRCHESEI’s health promotion work <http://fairtradebeer.com/reportfiles/KirkwoodThesis.pdf> .

HEALTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM and CURRICULUM.

Curriculum includes meetings with local health officials to learn and observe how the health system operates, lectures and powerpoint presentations in English, and research-intervention activities and field trips. In the past, when SiRCHESEI welcomed 3 or 4 multi-disciplinary students, there was much inter-disciplinary exchange of skills! Up to 4 persons share our interpreter/driver(and his car), getting them to all activities, and helping them interact with local Khmer speaking stakeholders. **Activities include:** Supervised research data collection experiences (based on ongoing projects already possessing Research Ethics Board clearance), both organized meetings and interviews with health officials and decision makers, and workplace interviews and breathalyzer testing, health workshop presentations (with pre-post questionnaires), following peer-educators to rural villages and participating in reproductive HIV/AIDS education, participating in anti-trafficking workshops and interviews with young children interacting with tourists, meetings and interviews with hospital directors and health officials to learn about the daily issues of organizing health delivery in an impoverished environment, possibility of attending a workshop of beer-sellers’ union urging better health and safety for workers, tour local hospitals and clinics. knowledge". We recommend each student brings a laptop with wifi, extra USB drives, an up-to-date antivirus program, WORD, EXCEL and SPSS. Prior to the start, we will have "SKYPE" conference calls to deal with questions and preparations.

Curriculum topics (may vary slightly from cohort to cohort)-- extra items may be added according to interns’ backgrounds/specialties:

Cambodia’s socio-demographic, gender, economic and health contexts and morbidity and mortality

Health Care Management in Cambodia: Government structures and programs, two-tiered health services, international agencies and NGOs.

Health challenges and health care delivery in Siem Reap: Local realities, the range of local infections and multiple illnesses

Visits to, and discussions with, staff of Provincial Referral Hospital (HIV/AIDS pavillion, ICU, Chronic Disease), Mondol Moi VCCT testing Centre, and rural Health Centres, and a Saturday evening visit to Khanta Bhopa/Jayavaraman VII pediatric Hospital for a concert/presentation by Dr. Beat Richner.

Systematic monitoring of HIV/AIDS: Government HSS, BSS surveillance, and SiRCHESEI annual VCCT health centre interviews (N=560)-- the longitudinal study of community risks

Alcohol abuse and related health risk-taking among entertainment workers in Cambodia

Research with entertainment workers: SiRCHESEI workplace interviewing and breathalyzing techniques, and data entry, with staff.

Health promotion workshops for women at risk: Questionnaires and education modules about HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, STIs, workplace violence, and alcohol overuse.

Anti-trafficking workshops with interviews for young vendors at Angkor Wat, solicited by sexual predators.

Variety of field observations and meetings with other NGOs dealing with men's, women's and children's health and safety, equitable treatment of rights, and workplace actions

Followup Interviews with SiRCHESI's "primary intervention" for 2 cohorts of beer-sellers who gained literacy at SiRCHESI's school, and changed careers to safer, healthier hotel workplaces 2006-2013

Costs: The course fee of US\$2000 includes comfortable, air-conditioned, shared hotel accommodations for 17 nights (with pool, cable TV, free internet/SKYPE, and buffet breakfast). (A single room, if requested, adds \$442 to the internship cost. Lunch and dinner -- Asian and Western style-- are available in the hotel dining room or room service for approximately \$5-7 per meal; there are many nearby "tourist" restaurants and lots of food shops within a 10 minute walk. (Each room has a small "mini-bar fridge" with extra space.) Some evenings, the staff will take you for dinner --e.g., beer-restaurant data-collection, Apsara dancer show and interviews. For some evenings of "rushed" data entry, dinner is provided. Interns have at their disposition a shared translator/driver, and (above) a full series of scheduled presentations, field trips, and supervised field research activities with the local NGO staff of SiRCHESI and international advisors. Since Participatory Action Research requires an "immersion" by researchers into the community, the first three days are designed to explore the community of Siem Reap/Angkor Wat and gain an understanding of the tourists who come here. On day 4 of 17, the formal health research/intervention components take over. The driver/translator accompanies the 2-4 students, and 1 staff member or international advisor supervises each module; transportation among all field sites is by car. The hotel dining room (and many tourist restaurants) provide "safe" meals at \$5-7, with vegetables washed in purified water, etc (This should be mentioned in the menu). Students eating "local foods" from street vendors may get sick during their stay, so we recommend always drinking and brushing teeth with bottled water (supplied by the hotel or available in grocery store across the road); exercise caution with food choices. Vegetarian food selection is available, but often "fish sauce" is used in the cooking. Vegans will find peanut butter and french fries, but persons on highly restricted diets may find some compromises needed to culturally adapt to local and tourist cuisine. Visit your Travel Medicine Clinic to determine what shots you should renew. For the moment, many of protect against Hepatitis A and B, and Malarone is an effective anti-malarial preventative treatment during the visit; older treatments may no longer be effective against Cambodian strains. Cambodia has high rates of TB, malaria, HIV/AIDS and STIs, Dengue Fever, encephalitis, etc. and reasonable precautions should be taken, e.g., long sleeves and pants in evenings, mosquito repellent.

Air fare to Siem Reap is not included. There are daily flights from Bangkok (Bangkok Airways), Singapore (Silkair, Air Asia), Vietnam, Seoul (Asiana, Korean), etc.

All international researchers work pro-bono. Neither SiRCHESI nor any international university "sponsors" this program, although their staff/researchers may be supervising on the ground. All students should insure that their own university or private or trip insurer provides insurance/risk coverage for off-campus, university-related work or touring in Cambodia.

TO APPLY: Please Contact SiRCHESI International Advisor **Prof. Ian Lubek**
<ilubek@uoguelph.ca>

Only 4 places available each intake. A \$250, non-refundable deposit guarantees yours.



1) Interns Michelle and Joel (Canada) and Claire (UK) with SiRCHESI staff, interviewing & breathalyzer testing



2) Beer sellers promote one brand



3) Many still drink with clients



4) Brett (Australia) and Trisha (Canada) work with young vendors at Angkor Wat



5) Breathalyzer testing of beersellers



6) Trisha prepares health workshop condom kits



7) Joel, Michelle (Canada) Claire (UK), Yulia and Darren (Canada) enter data during workshop



8) Michelle and Pam (Canada) at Angkor Wat



9) Michelle, Pam and peer educators in village health promotion outreach



10) Pauline (USA) assists Dr Mee Lian Wong (Singapore) with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome clinic



11) Teacher Neela (Australia) gives English Lessons to some of 26 former beer-sellers trained by SiRCHESI



12) Graduation ceremony for Hotel careers



13) Dr Sarath Kros leads vendor workshop



14) Dr Sarath, SiRCHESI staff



15) Translator Sophiap, Natalie (Australia) and Gabe (Canada) during follow-up interviews with Hotel students



16. Beer-sellers' Workshop questionnaires. 17. Kate purchases fair-trade bracelets, with translator Sophiap



18. Ian and Kristy meet pediatrician Dr. Beat Richner, founder of 5 private Khanta Bhopa hospitals

19. Vanessa (rt. rear), 3 HAP students, 2 children+staff



20. Hav Houl: Breathalyzing in Restaurant, Oct., 2012