



QSA Notes

people, places & projects



Babysitters and Broomsticks

It is the second week of training. A group of women are seated cross legged on the ground in the Cambodian Province of Pursat, surrounded by broom bristles, bamboo handles, knives and their young children. These women are learning how to make brooms as an income generating activity.

Within this group of 25 trainees, seven have no land to farm and are dependant on others for hiring their labour, or simply for charity. Others in the group previously made a small income from selling fruit at the market, or from the sale of date palm vinegar or a strong alcoholic brew made from date palms. With this training, all participants will have an additional

income source, which the village chief hopes will not only improve conditions for each trainee and their family, but also for the community as a whole.

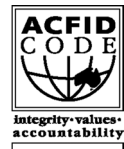
The brooms are of the short handled variety, made with a bamboo handle, natural fibre bristles, and bound with twine. The first step in the process is to create the bristles, by pounding the outer calyx (casing surrounding new growth) from the palm tree so that the resin is broken down and the fibres are revealed. The bamboo handles are purchased from the market as the bamboo required is solid and the local varieties are hollow. The part of the handle where the bristles will sit is shaved using a knife to make it a narrower surface, and the bristles are laid centrally over this. Two strips of

bamboo are placed along the side of the shaft to secure the bristles in place and to add strength, and the whole arrangement is held in place by the twine in a criss-cross fashion.

As midday approaches, the group goes home for lunch. A two hour lunch break allows people to complete household chores and rest during the hottest part of the day before returning for the afternoon's lesson. Skill is required in making the fibres completely free of the resin, the even allocation of the fibres, security of the knots and overall presentation. The trainer, Ran Phan, received her training in broom making from another NGO two years ago. She is responsible for checking the quality of the finished product and does insist on work being re-done during

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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this training phase if it is not correct. Training lasts for four weeks and leads to a certificate; however some of the trainees, she thinks, may need an additional week of support before their work is satisfactory.

For the participants, the training to get the finished product right is hard work. For mothers of young children there is the added difficulty of keeping an eye on their children, particularly with sharp knives around. After observing the broom-making classes, and some of the difficulties, QSA has provided funding for child minders during the 4-6 week course. Not only does this initiative enable the participants to focus all of their attention on the skills they need to learn, but it also means that the children are not playing so close to the knives. The gift of child care during broom making training courses is one of the Living Gifts on offer this year.

Living Gifts 2010

It's hard to believe it, but it is once again "Living Gift Time". Living Gifts support the work of Quaker Service Australia and will improve access to services and increase knowledge, skills and community expertise. Some of the new gifts for this year include a pig for a school garden in Uganda (\$30), environmental education in India (\$55), and Training and Equipment for Weaving classes in Cambodia (\$165). During September the new Living Gift Brochures will be distributed to QSA supporters and be available at local Quaker Meetings. In an attempt to cut down on paper

and postage, and thus allow QSA to send even more of your gift to our partners overseas, this year we will be offering Electronic Living Gifts. You can order your Living Gift online, and you can even opt to send an electronic card instead of a hard copy. For more information, visit www.qsa.org.au.

New Projects

QSA has recently embarked on a couple of new projects, some with trusted partners and some with new organisations. One newly supported project partner is Jalamba Organic Processes and Training Centre. They are promoting training in suitable agriculture to 30 farmers who are living on the island of Bunjakko in Lake Victoria in Uganda. It is an area with limited resources, and limited local food except fish from the lake, so this project will provide much needed dietary supplement as well as surplus produce for sale to alleviate their poverty. The director of this project partner is a member of the Board at St Jude Organic Farm Training Centre, so will always have good resources, knowledge and support on hand. Another new partner organisation, the Society for the Participatory Research and Integrated Training (SPRIT), has purchased the machinery to produce environmentally friendly paper cups. They are now training local women in the production and trading of these cups. We look forward to hearing more about these innovative activities.

Opposite page: A mother learns broom making skills while her children play nearby, Cambodia. Photo: QSA

Below: Cover of the Living Gifts catalogue.

