



Summary of Women's Project January 2012 - September 2013

History

Grace House Community Centre started the women's weaving project when a mother showed us her skill at knotting hemp into hammocks. Her daughter had been sick with Dengue fever and she stayed at home nursing the child causing the loss of her stall in the local market selling second hand clothes. It was suggested that she taught other mothers this skill so they could earn an income. The funds from Hesse Ragle Foundation assisted with the early stages of this project.

The project is now called "Grace Gecko Vocational Centre for Women" following financial input in the form of a building from the Green Gecko Project, an NGO working with street children. Two of the mothers from the Green Gecko Project have joined the classes.

Current Situation



The outlets have increased to 7 and include a 5* hotel and custom orders have been completed for another 5* hotel and 2 smaller establishments. The Centre joined the Angkor Handicraft Association which promotes locally made products. In December 2012 the association opened a craft market on the road to the Angkor Wat complex but after 4 months of trading sales were very poor and GHCC decided to move to another venue in the centre of town. This is a new Art Market attracting tourist buses and is open from 10.00 am to 9.00 pm daily. The move was made at the beginning of the low season for tourist so is currently running at a loss.

A small retail outlet was opened in front of GHCC in January 2012 and this provides a show case for visitors and volunteers. In April 2013 equipment was purchased to enable the sales of tea, soft drinks and biscuits. The biscuits are provided by a cafe in Siem Reap at cost price. A hotel in the centre of Siem Reap, the Shinta Mani organised monthly craft/ street markets - Made in Cambodia - which proved very

popular. It is hoped to continue these bi weekly once the rainy season finishes, however the hotel is still awaiting permission from the local government for this.

Many of the original women are still working at the centre and new trainees have joined. In total 15 women are currently employed with an additional 5 part timers manning the shop and market stall. A manager has been employed to oversee production and liaise with the retail outlets. The original Marketing and Quality Control officer was unable to work the

hours the position now demands due to child care commitments. She now works in the on-site shop in the afternoons. The original weaving instructor is still employed. Funds from an Australian foundation, Open Skies cover the instructors salary and partly fund the manager. In 2012 \$605 profit was made and fed into purchasing materials.

Currently there is no need for a creche worker as most of the children are now attending the Grace House pre school class. Women's workshops have continued with GHCC transporting the women to the Women's Resource Centre in Siem Reap. The Adult Literacy classes have currently ceased but a few women are attending the English language classes.

Weakness

GHCC is aware that more funds need to be spent on marketing, exploring the possibility of exporting products and developing a dedicated website for Grace Gecko. The current manager, although more proactive lacks the skills and confidence to move the project forward. New trainees need to be recruited to ensure continuation of output

Solutions

Employ a dedicated local marketing officer or recruit a long term volunteer to promote the project.

Arrange for the current work force to commence home working, freeing up space to recruit new students.

Reviewed and possibly consolidate the number of items produced. This is a challenge when the customer base includes Asian tourists and Western tourists, who have very different tastes.

Impact of Grace Gecko Vocational Centre for Women

The project has raised the self esteem of the women involved. They have proudly shared their skills with tourists and enjoyed outings to Angkor Wat and other temples (due to poverty, many had never been to Siem Reap). The impact on the local community has been noticeable with 15 families having a steady income which is spent in the local market. Several women have received micro loans run small businesses when not working at Grace Gecko Vocational Centre for Women or to improve their homes. Earlier this year they started a saving scheme and our social worker facilitated workshops on financial literacy.

Grace House Community Centre would like to thank Hesse Ragle Foundation for having the faith to support the Grace Gecko Vocational Centre for Women in the early days.

Bridget Cordory

Project Manager

30/9/2013