

Tourism Pipeline - Improving the pro-poor impact of tourists with Heritage Line Cruises

One of Prosperity Initiative Tourism teams main goals is increase the spend of tourists in the areas that will best benefit the poor. We are also highly aware of the desire of many tourists to help the poor and disadvantaged in the countries they holiday in, but very often go home with no idea on how to do this.

In August 2009 the Prosperity Initiative tourism team was approached by Heritage Line cruises who are building a luxury 27 cabin River Cruise vessel to assist in setting up a socially responsible tourism program which they could promote to their passengers to raise funds for and hence make a difference in the region.

We have used this connection to launch the first phase of The Cambodia Literacy Project pilot. Cambodia has major problems in the area of Literacy and it is getting worse:

- The UNDP Human Development Report of 2006 placed Cambodia's Education Index at 0.66, the 2nd worst in the Asean Region
- Only 47% of children actually complete primary school
- 4% of all rural and remote areas have never been to school
- 75% of teachers have not had a handbook for at least 4 years.
- 65% of students only graduate from year 1
- There is an acknowledged problem in lack of distribution of text books for schools

The MV Jayavarman will launch in November 2009 and cruise 7 nights from Ho Chi Minh City to Siem Reap travelling along the Mekong through some of the poorest regions in Cambodia that see little or no tourism. The Luxury cruise is being marketed to the discerning high end travel market in Australia, USA, UK and Europe.

The cruise will bring 2,500 new tourists to the regions of Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom each year. This will equate in donations of approximately \$50k per year, which will directly support the school resources and teacher training for 2,000 children.

The other main benefit of this project is that we are able to directly link tourism to the poorest of the poor and also show a positive light on tourism to the local community and a future pathway to possible employment.

The Project has since attracted support from Rotary International, Korean Airlines and Adventure traveller and Clayfield College Brisbane Australia private school. The project is fully funded to date from donations in cash and kind from its commercial partners. The project pilot is looking after 285 children in 8 classes in 3 schools. We hope that this will be expanded to 133,000 children by the end of 2015.