

Announcing health internships from “SiRCHESI” NGO in Siem Reap, Cambodia. An intensive, 17-day researcher/practitioner “full-immersion” course for small groups of 2-4.



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

Cambodian Registered NGO # 704

Next intakes: OPEN: Feb 17—Mar 5, 2014 (17-day); RESERVED: May 12- May 31, 2014 (20-day)/May 12- June 10 (31-day); OPEN: Aug. 20- Sept 4, 2014 (17-day).

SiRCHESI and the Community Health Challenges in Siem Reap

SiRCHESI (Siem Reap **C**itizens for **H**ealth, **E**ducational and **S**ocial 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 Angkor Wat temples, the tourism centre of Cambodia, the influx of visitors has introduced new infections such as HIV/AIDS, adding to the endemic tropical illnesses (malaria, tuberculosis, Dengue fever, encephalitis, dysentery, etc). 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 its 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 15 years of research-guided interventions in the community and correlated

lower prevalence rates, SiRCHESEI's staff can share their health delivery and research skills and knowledge. The internship program was designed so that staff can mentor, one-on-one, students and researchers interested in seeing, up close and personal, the creation, workings and monitoring of health programs/systems in a resource-challenged, developing country.

SiRCHESEI'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 SiRCHESEI'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, may also be arranged.

In 2014, Mr Pen Sary, an HIV Educator since 1997, is the Director, with 5 staff members and 23 outreach, peer-educators. International Advisors are academics working with the local staff who act as resources and intern supervisors. Prof. Ian Lubek will supervise the 2014 internships. Over the past 14 years, SiRCHESEI and its public health colleagues have provided valuable educational experiences in Siem Reap to 33 students/interns from 7 countries-- with 6 coming back for a second time. There were also two year-long Australian volunteers who taught English in SiRCHESEI's literacy and career training program (2006-2008). All have impacted the SiRCHESEI 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, SiRCHESEI launched the formal internship program, and three Australian students in public health and global development attended. In 2013, 8 student interns participated, in small working groups of 4. The SiRCHESEI staff will transfer back to the visiting interns, all the experience, skills and local understanding they acquired in the past years of active health research and intervention. SiRCHESEI 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. SiRCHESEI 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 SiRCHESEI Health Promotion programs:

SiRCHESEI 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 (2001-12);
- ii) active local and rural health outreach by peer educators (targeting more than 12,000 contacts in 2013);
- 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 SiRCHESI staff and stakeholders. In addition,

vi) as part of a “primary” prevention, in 2006, SiRCHESI founded a school to facilitate long-term, financially secure career paths for 26 women in the safer, healthier workplaces of large hotels. SiRCHESI continues to monitor their career, social and family progress into 2014;

vii) SiRCHESI’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) SiRCHESI has strengthened health promotion infra-structure through its “**hybrid model of capacity building**”. Elizabeth Kirkwood (2009) has recently evaluated SiRCHESI’s health promotion work <http://fairtradebeer.com/reportfiles/KirkwoodThesis.pdf> .

HEALTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM and CURRICULUM.

The internship curriculum includes meetings with local health providers to learn and observe how the multi-tier (public, non-profit private, and for-profit private) health system operates, lectures and powerpoint presentations in English, and research-intervention activities and field trips. SiRCHESI welcomes multi-disciplinary students to interchange skills and ideas! Four persons share our interpreter/driver (and his car), 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), 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 workers to learn about the daily issues of organizing health delivery in an impoverished environment, f attending a workshop for beer-sellers’, meeting union officials urging better health and safety for workers, visiting local hospitals, clinics and NGOs. We recommend each student brings a laptop with wifi, extra USB drives, an up-to-date antivirus program, WORD, EXCEL and SPSS installed. Prior to the start, "SKYPE" conference calls and emails can deal with questions and preparations, and a FAQ sheet will be sent, based on previous internships..

[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 contexts on health, morbidity and mortality
 Health Care Management in Cambodia: Government structures and programs, three-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, Khanta Bhopa/Jayavaraman VII pediatric Hospital for a concert/presentation by Dr. Beat Richner, and a later tour of blood-bank laboratories, Angkor Children’s Hospital; NewHope Cambodia NGO school and clinic for alcohol treatment. .

Alcohol abuse and related health risk-taking among entertainment workers in Cambodia involves SiRCHESI workplace interviewing and breathalyzing, 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.

Workshops for anti-trafficking/avoiding sexual predators for young vendors at Angkor Wat, with followup interviews .

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 2006-2014

Costs: The 2014 course fee of US\$2250 includes comfortable, air-conditioned, shared hotel accommodations for 17 nights, with pool, cable TV, free internet/SKYPE, and buffet breakfast. One additional meal per day is covered by the program, which can be taken at the hotel, in a "beer restaurant", or at a tourist restaurant nearby. A single room, if requested, adds approximately \$450 to the internship cost. Additional costs are associated with 20- and 31-day programs. Each room has a small "mini-bar fridge" with extra space for snacks and beverages, an all-night store is behind the hotel, the Angkor Market, one block away, has 'comfort foods from home", and an upscale "Lucky Mall" is across the road. Some evenings, the staff will take you for dinner --e.g., beer-restaurant data-collection, Apsara dancer show. Interns have at their disposition a shared translator/driver, and (see above) a full series of scheduled presentations, field trips, data collection, 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; all admission fees are now covered in the internship cost. On day 4 of 17, the formal health research/intervention components take over. The driver/translator accompanies the 4 students in his car; 1 staff member or international advisor supervises each module. The hotel dining room and many nearby tourist restaurants provide "safe" meals at \$5- \$8.50, with vegetables washed in purified water, etc (This should be mentioned in a tourist restaurant menu). Students eating "local foods" from street vendors may get sick during their stay, so we recommend exercising caution with food choices, and always drinking and brushing teeth with bottled water (supplied by the hotel or available in grocery store across the road). 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; we suggest shots against Hepatitis A and B. Malarone is an effective anti-malarial prevention treatment during the visit; older treatments (e.g., Doxycycline) may no longer be effective against Cambodian strains and may have side effects. 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--especially the variety purchased locally.

Air fare to Siem Reap and Insurance are not included. There are daily flights from Bangkok (Bangkok Airways; Angkor Airways), Singapore (Silkair, Air Asia), Vietnam, Seoul (Asiana, Korean) and Shanghai and other Chinese cities, etc. Buses from Bangkok can take 8 hours. Buses from Phnom Penh (with additional airline service-- Thai, Malaysian, EVA, Dragonair) can take 6-8 hours. 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 make sure that their own university or private 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>

Four places are available each intake. A \$250, non-refundable deposit, sent to SiRCHESI's account in Cambodia, guarantees your spot (first-come, first serve).



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(2012)



14) Dr Sarath, SiRCHESI staff (2004)



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. Breathalyzing in Restaurant, Oct., 2012.

21./22. 2013--interns from U. Guelph, U. Hannover, U. Alberta