

**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 14-29, 2012, June 1-15, 2012, August, 2012.



Cambodian Registered NGO # 704

Siem Reap Citizens for Health, Educational, and Social Issues



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

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.

The arrival of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia co-incided with the 1991 mandate of peace-keeping UN soldiers (UNTAC), followed by inter-national land-mine clearance teams throughout the 1990s. Because Siem Reap is located next to the Angkor Wat temples, the focus of Cambodia's tourism industry, the great influx of tourists have introduced new infections, adding to the endemic tropical illnesses (malaria, tuberculosis, Dengue fever). As tourism numbers increased annually towards the current 2 million mark, the combination of sexual tourists, local men's non-monogamous behaviour, and poverty-driven sex work all 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 Cambodia, and that country had the highest rates in South-East Asia.

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 serves as part time Program Director for SiRCHESI.

Today, after a decade of successful work in the field 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 the health system in a resource-challenged, developing country.

SiRCHESI's new INTERNSHIPS

In a short, intense two week period (or three, according to home university's needs), up to 4 students at a time will participate in a series of modules involving hands-on field research, health interventions, hospital rounds, 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 trade unions, can be arranged.

Dr. Sarath Kros, MD, MSc, is SiRCHESI's part-time NGO Program Director, and has worked in Siem Reap medical circles since 1991.¹ He supervises 5 part-time staff-- 4 health workers/ educators and 1 Health IT/data specialist -- and 23 peer-educator outreach workers (with 5 additional trained part-time interviewers). In addition, he directs the Provincial AIDS Office and is Deputy Director of the Provincial Health Department, which oversees all health delivery, NGO co-ordination, and government policy implementation in the province. Over the past 11 years, SiRCHESI and its public health colleagues have provided valuable educational experiences in Siem Reap to more than 20 students/interns from 6 countries who helped further train the local staff in 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 internships (see <http://www.fairtradebeer.com>). In 2012, SiRCHESI staff are now prepared to share, with small groups of 2-4 interns, all the experience, skills and local understanding acquired in the past decade of active health research and intervention in this unique community. 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 (2001-11);

¹He holds degrees and training from the University of Health Sciences, Phnom Penh, Institute for Tropical Medicine (Antwerp, Belgium), Hanoi School of Public Health (Vietnam) and has been a Fogarty Fellow in the HIV International Research program at Brown University (USA). He has presented papers at international conferences and co-authored journal articles with SiRCHESI co-workers and international researchers and interns.

ii) active local and rural health outreach by peer educators (targeting more than 10,000 contacts in 2011);

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 and social progress into 2011;

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

HEALTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM and CURRICULUM.

Program elements: 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 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, attend workshop of new union urging better health and safety for workers, tour 2 or three local hospitals and clinics² Curriculum includes meetings with local health officials to learn and observe how the health system operates, lectures, and research/intervention activities and field trips. In the past, when SiRCHESI welcomed 3 or 4 multi-disciplinary students, there was much inter-disciplinary exchange of skills and knowledge"³.

Curriculum topics:

i) Cambodia, 1960-2010: The socio-demographic, gender, economic and health contexts and morbidity and mortality

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

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

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

²Note: Rounds with doctors may be restricted to medical students, and will depend on local University's risk assessment and students'/interns' knowledge and skill level;

³. We recommend each student brings a laptop with wifi, USB drives, and an up-to-date antivirus program. Prior to the start, we will have "SKYPE" conference calls to deal with questions and preparations.

- v) How HAART in Cambodia is ramping up: Local training and international donors
- vi) Systematic monitoring of HIV/AIDS: Government HSS, BSS surveillance, and SiRCHESI annual VCCT health centre interviews (N=560)-- the longitudinal study of community risks
- vii) Alcohol abuse and related health risk-taking among entertainment workers in Cambodia involves research with entertainment workers: SiRCHESI workplace interviewing and breathalyzing techniques, and data entry, with staff.
- viii) Health promotion workshops for women at risk: Questionnaires and education modules about HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, STIs, workplace violence, and alcohol overuse.
- ix) Anti-trafficking workshops with interviews for young vendors at Angkor Wat, solicited by sexual predators.
- x) 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
- xi) Psychological followup of 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 2006-2011

Costs: The course fee this year is US\$2000 (4 monthly payments of \$500 are possible); a non-refundable deposit of \$250 holds your reserved place. Tuition includes comfortable, air-conditioned, shared hotel accommodations (with pool, cable TV, free internet/SKYPE, buffet breakfast and one other meal), a shared translator and driver, and a full series of scheduled presentations, field trips, rounds, and supervised field research activities with the local NGO staff of SiRCHESI and international advisors. Students interested in exploring the cultural tourism aspects of Siem Reap/Angkor Wat may wish to add extra days at the end of their stays. The driver/translator will accompany the 2-4 students, and 1 staff member supervises each module; transportation among all field sites is by car. The hotel dining room (and many tourist restaurants) provide "safe" meals at \$5-8, with vegetables washed in purified water, etc⁴. Visit your Travel Medicine Clinic to determine what shots you should renew. For the moment, many of us have found Malarone an effective anti-malarial preventative treatment during the visit. Cambodia has high rates of TB, malaria, HIV/AIDS and STIs, Dengue Fever, encephalitis, etc. and reasonable precautions should be taken.

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. No international university "sponsors" this program, although their staff/researchers may be voluntarily supervising on the ground. SiRCHESI does not provide health coverage insurance for internships. All students should insure that their own university provides insurance/risk coverage for off-campus university-related work in Cambodia. Some supervisors may be able to deduct the costs of the internship and travel from their research/training grants.

Please Contact: SiRCHESI Program Director **Dr. Sarath Kros** <sarathkros@gmail.com>
or International Advisor **Prof. Ian Lubek** <ilubek@uoguelph.ca>

⁴Students eating "local foods" from street vendors often get sick during their stay, so we recommend always drinking and brushing teeth with bottled water and exercising 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



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 for beer-sellers

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 young vendor workshop

14) Dr Sarath and SiRCHESI staff

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