



Louder than words

Mission Partners Conrad and Elizabeth Foote, who work among people living with HIV/AIDS in Cambodia, explain the luxury of living simply.

Our first home here was a lovely flat in the capital, Phnom Penh, so we could be near the Anglican Church, but it felt strange to live in a nicer place than any in which we'd lived in Britain.

An important mission principle is incarnational living - living as Jesus would - so in March we moved to a smaller, wooden house in one of the city's poor areas. Work was done to make the bathroom and kitchen resemble such amenities! We don't have a flush toilet - we're fortunate to have a squat-hole that doubles up as a bath.

It's been difficult getting used to having no running water. There is a communal tap outside where we collect our brown, smelly river water, for which we pay! We put this water into a sand filter, then into a catadine filter and only then can we drink it, although it's a bit 'chewy' and tastes of chemicals. We've learnt that one of the most important qualities a mission partner can have is a sense of humour.

Even though it feels at present like we're on a camping trip, we feel we're doing the right thing by living here. Although we acknowledge how different we are from the Khmer people, here we feel more in touch with them and the troubles they go through. We want our children to live simply, with Khmer people as their neighbours. We don't want them to grow up with any sense of cultural superiority.

Living here is helping us to improve our language skills as well as establish quality relationships with local people.

Spiritually, it's been tough at times. There is so much sadness, corruption and poverty. When living and working among the poor, it seems natural to ask God 'Why?' We might never know the answer during our lifetime but it helps us and them if we actually do something, big or small, about the injustice we see around us. We really hope and pray that people may catch glimpses of Jesus in the relationships we establish as well as in our actions.

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