

Third Place in the OCNA Better Newspaper Award's General Excellence category.
 Third place in the CCNA Better Newspaper Award's Outstanding Campus Newspaper category



News Opinion Features Arts Science Sports

Home > Sports > Peace for land mined farm land

pdf print email

Peace for land mined farm land

[Andrew Abela](#)



From 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia caused the death of approximately 1.7 million people.

Lead by Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge extremist ideology controlled the pacific country with guerrilla warfare and disregard for human life. The end result was atrocious: mass repression and mass murder, mainly due to careless execution, starvation and forced labour.

Because of widespread deployment of land mines, many Cambodian people have lost their limbs due to unexpected detonation. Sadly, despite many relief efforts, 10 million land mines still remain in the ground of Cambodia.

Khmer Rouge regime members were often victims of crippling war injury as well. Many hard-working Cambodians as well as the controllers themselves are now having difficulty surviving in war-torn Cambodia.

Not all people require the use of both arms and legs to live a meaningful life, though. A documentary entitled Bare Hands and Wooden Limbs explores a special, peaceful effort to aid some of the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime. A farm village known as Veal Thom in western Cambodia was created in 2000 with one sole mission: to provide a place to live and work for some of the amputees of Cambodia — many of whom are shunned outcasts of society.

Nearly 400 disabled people and their families live in Veal Thom on a sustainable allotment of five acres each. Everything is literally built with their "bare hands and wooden limbs," to quote Chhêm Sip, a man who was captured and tortured at 14 during the dark war-torn period in Cambodia.

Chhêm admits that he can "forgive but not forget" the cruelty he and many others lived, yet still he puts aside his personal past of pain to improve the lives of others. In the interest of helping the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime, Chhêm made the honourable decision to work with the Chief of Veal Thom, Touj Souerly, a former Khmer Rouge commander.

Although Chhêm and Touj have set aside their differences to work on Veal Thom, their relationship is still very far from the standard coworker dynamic according to director Alison McMahan, "because of cultural values and obvious political reasons, these are men that are unable to even break bread and share a meal."

Bare Hands and Wooden Limbs is ultimately a documentary about humanity and the sad reality that those who have suffered most are often overlooked by society or even the world at large. Despite the gravity and magnitude of the Cambodian genocide and the lengthy list of consequences that it has had on a group of innocent people, this documentary has not yet been released on a large scale.

The amputee citizens of Veal Thom are all victims in their own personal right. They all work hard each day and live together in meager, yet bountiful western Cambodia. As McMahan puts it, "with my car, central heating and opportunities, I can't help but feel so lucky for everything that I have in North America."

search...



June 15, 2007
 Volume 30
 Issue 4

[View all issues](#)

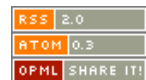
Things to click

- [About Imprint Online](#)
- [Letter to the Editor](#)
- [Online Polls](#)
- [CUP 2007](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- [Old Imprint](#)

Imprint Publications

- [About Imprint](#)
- [Mission Statement](#)
- [Board of Directors](#)
- [Editorial Board](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Stay Updated



Login

Username

Password

Remember me

Login

[Password Reminder](#)

No account yet? [Create one](#)



[Share on Facebook](#)

Comments

RSS

Write comment

Name:

Title:

UBBCode: **B**  **U**     -color- -size-



Send

Security question: Answer:
Answer the following: 1+2

[< Previous](#)