

## **Eyes Open – Why did we decide to collaborate with the Ponheary Ly Foundation?**

After a few weeks visiting several possible projects in Siem Reap, Cambodia, we decided to offer our support and partner the **Ponheary Ly Foundation** ([www.theplf.org](http://www.theplf.org)) in December 2012. The sole aim of the PLF is to enable children to go to school and it currently supports 2,800 children to do so.

The **Ponheary Ly Foundation (PLF)** is noticeably different to other organisations and we like their ethos and approach. To mention in particular:

1. **The PLF works exclusively with state schools**, which means the PLF doesn't own or run the schools it supports. The advantages to this are:
  - The state is responsible for paying the ground rent, the upkeep of the buildings and the salaries of teaching staff. PLF therefore does not absorb these costs.
  - All children who complete their education at a state school receive an official diploma. Non-government run schools can't issue this diploma - so if the children don't go to a state school, they can't get their diploma.
  - As seen with some non-state funded schools, such as those owned or run by other charitable organisations, if the funding ceases the schools have to close. The pupils attending return to the streets, or if they attempt to transfer to a state school they have to start their education again from grade 1, even if they had previously reached as high as grade 5.
2. **All children in the respective villages can attend the schools.** This is completely different to other school projects we have visited where not all children are given the same opportunities for education. With the PLF ethos all children in the village get the chance to attend the school, a whole generation is educated, a whole village's future has the potential to change for the better.
3. **The demand for tourists to visit schools** in Cambodia is very high. Lots of schools open their doors for everyone but children aren't a tourist attraction! PLF does the opposite - tourists can't visit schools without a reason and these visits have to benefit the children directly. For example, cooking a lunch for everyone, bringing in food which the children can take home, or paying for a field trip. The tourists finance one of these activities, the PLF organise it and the donors can be part of the event to see how and where their money is being spent.
4. **The foundation was established and is personally run by a Cambodian family.** They live in Siem Reap and have a responsibility for their community. After emerging from the war in a state of poverty they rebuilt their family and experienced personally that **education is the only way out of poverty.**