

HAGAR

the whole reason.

Hagar Australia Inc | PO Box 67 St Kilda Victoria 3182



JUSTICE PURSUED, VOICES HEARD

For a witness in a Cambodian courtroom, the experience can be harrowing. Even child witnesses have to testify while standing right next to their abusers. The same ones who sold, raped or exploited them. Then, sometimes the judge laughs at a young child's testimony. Sometimes the perpetrator's friends or family jeer. Children may be told that it's all their fault. It's in stark contrast to child-friendly practices common in developed countries. At Hagar last year, 38 clients - most of them children - were involved in court cases. We're committed to make the situation better. **We launched two initiatives in 2011 to help support clients through the legal process.**

A new Hagar Legal and Protection Unit includes a Cambodian lawyer and expatriate advisor who ensure that clients are informed and supported. They accompany clients to appointments. They prepare them for court. Because when a victim stands up in court, speaks the truth, and **is believed**, it is a key part of the whole journey - from victim to survivor.

Also, Hagar and two other organisations have begun collaborating with the Cambodian Ministry of Justice to increase the child-friendliness of the system. Along with an art therapy consultant, we are designing a waiting room with the goal of providing a **sanctuary**. Children will be brought to the courtroom only when it is time for their voices to be heard. They will be exposed to less trauma, accusations and chaos.

Last year, all concluded Hagar Cambodia legal cases resulted in a positive outcome. The perpetrator was convicted, sentenced, and fined. These results are not just a testament to good legal support. They reflect inner strength, good recovery services, and each person's God-given resilience.

Finh's Story

Journey to Wholeness

Finh (not her real name) took a risk when she moved to Taiwan. She was forced to work excessive hours in a plastics factory. Exhausted from overwork, Finh's hand was crushed by machinery. Then a poorly performed surgery made matters worse. She was cheated out of her wages, and forced to return home.

Finh's story is all too familiar. With few job opportunities at home, Vietnamese women take risks and travel to other countries. Too often they are exploited and abused by employers and agents.

Back home, Finh was referred to Hagar. She has thrived in personal development classes and on-the-job skills training. Finh continues to need counseling, and Hagar continues to provide it. But Finh is healing from her physical and emotional scars. She supports herself by managing two shoe shops in Hanoi.

Most importantly, Finh is becoming **whole** again. In fact, stories like Finh's are **the whole reason** for Hagar.

Hagar Legal Lunch

Melbourne

Pricilla Chan, head of Hagar's legal and protection unit will be speaking to members of Melbourne's legal community in April.



We take risk, defy the odds and challenge the realm of impossibility. We identify with the outcasts of society, pursue justice, and commit to protect each individual at all costs — from Hagar Core Values

Witnessing Hagar for the First Time

I departed for Cambodia in January this as the Principal [on holiday] of the wonderful Centenary Heights State High School in Toowoomba and came back eight days later as Principal with a passion for us to become a partner school with Hagar International. Prior to my trip our students and staff had already raised funds for Hagar at the instigation of two students. The inspiration for change from a school that raised funds to a partner school was what I experienced while in Cambodia.

I saw incredible resilience in the faces of so many children who had been so badly treated. I saw a country trying to 'get on its feet' after the horrific acts of the Pol Pot era. I saw Cambodian teachers so committed to the education of their students and to their own learning. I saw pain and suffering – and I saw hope.

I saw first hand the strategic organisation of Hagar and its wonderful employees – so committed to restoring this hope.

The word to describe the depth of my experience has never left me: 'Important'. This knowledge is important. A visit to the Killing Fields to see how all this started is important. A visit to the House of Smiles is important. A visit to Hagar Community Learning Centre is important. A visit to one's own head is important: 'how do I process this emotion, this challenge? What is the most effective role I can play to support the work of Hagar? How might I mobilise our Student Leadership group to lead this?'

That mobilisation is happening as we speak. I hope to take a small group of student leaders and teachers to Hagar next January so that they in turn can spread the word and continue to grow our passion to partner with Hagar.

Maryanne Walsh - Principal, Centenary Heights State High School, Queensland

An Orphaned Street Kid Overcomes His Dark Past

Like a frog at the bottom of a well, I lived my life in darkness with no hope and no future. My family was poor from the start and my parents tried their best to support us. But they passed away when I was still very young.

For a time I lived with my older brother and his family. But I was never happy there. I was abused and witnessed violence. I decided to run away. But life on my own was more difficult than I thought.

I became a beggar, a street kid. I slept on the sidewalk and collected rubbish to buy food. I had no friends and no hope. I joined a gang who said they would be my family- my 'older brothers'. But later, I saw who they really were. They took advantage of me and threatened me. Every day they forced me to work and give them the money I earned. When I failed to obey them, they beat me like a dog.

Every night I slept in fear. I lived this way for three years. Finally, I saw hope. A friend brought me to an NGO that works with boys like me. They referred me to Hagar. It was then that I began to see a new world. Hagar became the family I always longed for. I received education and training. I've never felt happier in my life.

Today I am in my third year in college studying Information Technology. I work as an intern in Hagar's IT management team. I am also a leader in my church and a member of a sports club. After all these years I have learned that there is always hope even when we think we are hopeless. I have escaped the darkness. I am experiencing the fullness of life.

“What matters is going deeper, one individual at a time. Confronting the impossible with courage and nurturing wholeness with grace and excellence.”

Harvey Collins - Chairman, Hagar International

Save the Date!

Sue Taylor's Australian visit

Sue Taylor is coming to Australia in May. Sue pioneered Hagar's Aftercare program and currently serves as Psychosocial Technical Advisor. She will be coming to Australia in May, speaking in Perth, Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

Perth Breakfast - 26 May 2012 at the Boatshed Cafe. Tickets: \$40 per person. There will be events in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra in May, please call Meredith on 0405 195 355 for more information.

From our CEO

My name is Kate Kennedy and I'm the new CEO of Hagar Australia. I've just returned from my first tour of Hagar's programs in Cambodia and Vietnam.



It wasn't without trepidation that I left.

I knew I would encounter children who had been raped and sold. And women who had suffered severe human rights abuses such as Finh's story in this newsletter. I prepared myself for the darkness.

But what I encountered in Cambodia was shocking in a different way. I encountered hope, a hope stemming from the freedom they now enjoy after escaping domestic slavery, paedophiles and abusive husbands. I saw Hagar's work offering these women and children counselling, safe accommodation and through individualised education and training, a life where they could be safe and happy.

There is much more to do. We need to raise public awareness and marshal our growing network of compassionate individuals seeking to make a difference. We must continue to grow our support base of people like you who provide the essential financial lifeblood for Hagar's work. And we must also begin a journey with the federal government to seek access to the aid budget.

I look forward to working with you, our Australian supporters and partners, in making the journey from despair to dignity and hope a reality for these women and children.

Yours warmly,

*Kate Kennedy
CEO, Hagar Australia*

