

5 minutes with...

# The joy of giving

**JASSMIN PETER** speaks with those who receive joy in giving back and finds out how committing to a cause and being the catalysts for change is how we can all make a difference.



**Kathryn Sams**  
HR and Administrative Assistant  
International Medical Clinic (IMC)

**The Cause:** Caring for Cambodia (CFC) is a Cambodian run, non-governmental, charitable organisation with a mission to secure a better, brighter future for the children of Cambodia by

providing them with an education and the resources necessary for success.

**TF: How did IMC get involved with CFC?**

**KS:** We met CFC when they were working on a project involving 14 schools in Cambodia making improvements in the classrooms, books, quality of the teachers and availability of uniforms. However, there was a clear and vital need to improve the children's access to quality healthcare, which is IMC's specialty. It was a perfect fit!



**TF: How is IMC involved?**

**KS:** Although the Government provides basic childhood vaccinations, the children of Cambodia receive no routine healthcare or annual check-ups. IMC screens their vision and measures their height and weight, which is used to identify those suffering from malnutrition and stunted growth. To curb this, we also improve their daily diet. CFC provides two meals a day at their schools which

include rice porridge with fish or pork and vegetables with reduced sugar content.

**TF: How was the Cambodian experience for you?**


**KS:** When the screenings began, the children were nervous because they didn't know if this test was going to hurt them or what the outcome would mean. It didn't take long to loosen them up with smiles and encouragement. By the end of the day my cheeks hurt from grinning nonstop. After day three I realised there were no more children left to screen and I became emotional because I didn't want the experience to end. The children's smiles make your heart smile.

**TF: How has CFC changed your life?**

**KS:** Cambodians have endured a lot of devastation. However, despite the tragedies they're still welcoming, cheerful, and grateful for everything they have. Meeting these people made me re-evaluate what I value in my life. If they can go through starvation and lose their family yet still keep their heads up, what do I have to stress over? Happiness is all about appreciating life and the people who are a part of it.

**Get involved:** Contact CFC if you like to donate your time, money, old school uniforms, soap, toothbrushes, flip flops, etc. [www.caringforcambodia.org](http://www.caringforcambodia.org), Email: [volunteers@caringforcambodia.org](mailto:volunteers@caringforcambodia.org)

**TF: Any life lessons?**

**ZT:** It's been a humbling and inspiring journey. Approaching the notion of charity through adventure was what got me started and taught me there's no perfect cause, no perfect time and no perfect place to start giving back. Giving is an art, and to fully develop that skill, you have to start by finding a cause and having an effect. 

**Get involved:** In 2012, TCRP will be taking part in the 24-hour Mt Apo Boulder Challenge held in Davao del Sur. This initiative aims to raise the profile of Davao as a safe tourist destination and to raise money for Visayan Forum Foundation Inc. which combats human trafficking. [www.thechainreactionproject.com](http://www.thechainreactionproject.com)

**Zhang Tingjun**  
Co-Founder and Director  
The Chain Reaction Project (TCRP)



**The Cause:** United by a passion for adventure and philanthropy, TCRP seeks physical challenges and local organisations that can benefit from their efforts. TCRP's mission is to inspire catalysts and change perspectives.

**TF: How was TCRP initiated?**

**ZT:** TCRP started in August 2009 with the Tour de Timor, a five-day, 450-kilometre mountain bike race in Timor-Leste. Using the race as a platform, and thanks to the power of social networking and the media, TCRP successfully raised more than US\$35,000 for HIAM-Health, a local malnutrition rehabilitation centre for children.

I think we needed HIAM as much as it needed us at the time. Our success and failure during that first year was closely intertwined. It was pretty much on a wing and a prayer that my teammates and I threw ourselves into the project. We were new and had no idea what we were doing would even matter. On December 11 2010, HIAM emailed us to let us know the Centre had been awarded a certificate of recognition from the Timorese Government for their contribution to children's rights. For the first time in seven years, HIAM was finally recognised for their efforts! This was a significant moment for me and remains till today a source of inspiration. I regularly read HIAM's email to remind me although it takes time, and an insane amount of passion and dedication, everybody is capable of being a catalyst for change.

**TF: How do you decide which causes to support?**

**ZT:** TCRP doesn't focus on one specific cause. We select our causes based on the personal backgrounds of our team and input from our catalysts. One teammate Anina is from South Africa and another Alex grew up in the Philippines. Their desire to give back to their own countries saw us head to Africa in 2011 and the Philippines in 2012.

Once we decide on a country, we study its challenges and determine how we can make a difference. Then we decide which charity to work with and do a needs assessment to crystallise our fund and awareness raising target for the year and sustainability plan beyond the trip. Finally, we choose a corresponding adventure to complete the experience. There are causes all over the world, and TCRP's mission is to give maximum exposure to as many as we can.

**TF: Best thing about TCRP?**

**ZT:** I have three best things. The first is seeing the difference TCRP and all our catalysts are making. Even individuals with limited experience in charity work can make a profound difference in the lives of others. The second is watching that same realisation dawn on the people who join our adventures. And lastly is the opportunity to work alongside some of the most inspirational people I've ever met.



**TF: How has TCRP changed your life?**

**ZT:** I've always been a very competitive person. I was a national netball player and equated winning with success. TCRP has compelled me to redefine my definition of success and changed my perspective of what's worth fighting for. Now it matters more to me that TCRP completes the adventures we embark on as team, as opposed to my personal performance. Fighting to ensure support and funding is given to the needy is more rewarding than if I were to succeed in a capacity only beneficial to myself.