

The newsletter
of Adventist
Southeast
Asia
Projects

ASAP

ADVENTIST SOUTHEAST ASIA PROJECTS

May/June, 2004



Imprisonment

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Houmphanh Kongsengphengphet (left), district pastor, studies the Bible with Seng Lee, Samboun and Khomsao, *Hmong Bible workers, on page 6 read of the courage of Seng Lee as he witnesses amidst severe persecution.

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Adventist Southeast Asia Project's purpose is to support the preaching of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ through church planting and evangelism endeavors for Southeast Asian people throughout the world. As a privately funded nonprofit organization, we work as a supporting ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As an unaffiliated independent ministry, we are dependent upon God to move people to support this work. For information write to **Adventist Southeast Asia Projects, PO Box 84, Berrien Springs, MI 49103.** (Tax-deductible contributions may be sent with the enclosed envelope.) Our telephone #: 269-471-3026. Our fax #: 269-471-3034. Our e-mail: asap84@cs.com. ASAP web page information that is maintained and updated by Sereivudh Ly can be found at: <http://www.tagnet.org/asap>. We would love to hear from you. Please feel free to contact us at any time.

Editor's Update ... by Judy Aitken



I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20 NIV).

Dr. Mary Ann McNeilus and I recently returned from four weeks of traveling in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. We visited and encouraged ASAP supported national pastors, church planters and lay Bible workers. Again, we return from the trip amazed at the dedication and sacrifice of the workers in the field. The minor inconveniences we encountered on our trip: sleeping in mosquito-infested areas, the scorching tropical heat, traveling long hours on poor roads, etc. pale dramatically compared to the everyday sacrifices made by the work-

ers in the field. And any hardship experienced on our account was quickly forgotten as we experienced the joy of seeing firsthand the powerful way God's workers are sharing the gospel message.

The road on the trip to Takong where the Lao church planting project is located was covered with potholes, causing us to be tossed around the cabin of the van. Armed groups of thieves notoriously frequent the road going to Roviang, another church planting project location. We thank the Lord for giving us endurance, protection and good



Judy (left) and Mary Ann (right) on their way from Poipet to Battambang, Cambodia with church members.

health throughout all our travels.


Repeatedly, as I ate with, talked with, and worshiped with the pastors and Bible workers in Southeast Asia, I was struck by the fact that each of these men and women personally experience the meaning of being crucified with Christ. I had the privilege of interviewing many Khmer lay Bible workers. Some are barely surviving on small portions of food each day. Though they often go to bed hungry, they work with an energetic zeal for Jesus Christ. Pan Tiem is a worker for Jesus in Battambang Province (see page 8). He faithfully makes his church planting work top priority. In order to provide for his wife and five children, he repairs bicycle tires on the side. Though his meager earnings only provide basic food for his family, he doesn't let this stop him from preaching and leading three village churches. Workers like Pan Tiem and Bun Chap (see pages 9,10) willingly and happily give their lives for Christ's service as they step out of their comfort zone—sacrificing physical comforts to win souls for the Kingdom. Because Christ lives in them, through His Spirit, He gives them power to live and witness for Him.

Pastors, Bible workers and members in Vietnam also suffer for their faith in God. I had tears of joy as I listened to the testimonies of these courageous men and women, and my heart was heavy with pain as I heard the accounts of continual suffering and sacrifice.

What these workers endure for Christ is amazing. They often get arrested while serving and worshiping God in house churches. The local police confiscate all Bibles, religious books, hymnbooks and Bible lessons that are found in the house. When and before they are put in prison, they suffer beatings, threats, torture and interrogation. When Vietnamese missionaries Dinh Hanh and Tran Minh shared their testimony with me (see page 11), as with so many of the pastors and Bible workers, I was again impressed by

their willingness to give up everything to win souls for Christ. Vietnam, a country populated with about 85 million, is largely made up of Buddhists. Though it is a small dent in the big number, we are thrilled that more than 45,000 believers joined the Adventist Church through the house church movement. This is a result of dedicated ASAP supporters who support God's Word being preached through the Peace and Happiness radio program led by Pastor Isah Young. We have also recently received word that an additional 110,000 people are worshiping God on the Sabbath right now, within their own homes, and asking to join God's remnant church. This is just the beginning. We know that God has even bigger plans than this for Vietnam, just as He does for Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. He desires for His gospel to be spread to all of His children who haven't yet heard about Him.

As I reflect on the amazing sacrifice and suffering Christ endured for us on the cross, my heart overflows with love and gratitude for Him. I naturally want to join the national workers in citing, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). This is the response of everyone committed to missions – who sacrifice for God through your offerings and service to Him. I sincerely thank you on behalf of the hundreds of Southeast Asian ASAP workers, for your partnership in this work. Thank you for stepping out of your comfort zone and sacrificing for Christ by giving more of your time than you ever have in prayer for the work. Thank you for stepping out of your financial comfort zone and giving more than you ever thought you could afford.

What a sacrificial partnership with God! Each one of you, our readers, and the workers in the field are helping to bring about the rapid spread of the gospel throughout Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. 

Smiles from Little People


by Linda Bauer



Suy Kok Theam, administrator of the ICC Orphanage gives gifts to the orphans given by members from the Montrose SDA Church, Colorado.

Children from two different orphanages in Cambodia were thrilled when they were given bags of toys made up by church members in Montrose, Colorado. Kay Mason, a member of the Montrose Church, has a big interest in missions and likes to keep missions alive in her church. She contacted ASAP and learned that there are two SDA orphanages operating (International Children's Care and SALT Ministries) in Cambodia. She then decided that it would be good to have the women of the church work on some crafts and toys to send to the children. They met together one Sunday and as the women were working on the project they

came up with the idea that the men of the church shouldn't be left out and that they could help, too. The next Sunday saw many men at work on lacing bags to hold the toys. Kay wrote to us and said that everyone that turned out to help with the toys had a great time working and eating together (yes, food is a good prompter to get people out).

From the grins on the faces of the children in the picture you can see that the members of the Montrose Church brought much happiness to the children. ASAP sends a BIG thank you to Kay Mason and her troop of volunteer helpers who had a vision to do something for others. 



Imprisonment

by Judy Aithen

Imagine what it would be like sitting in a cramped, damp, dirty prison cell in northern Laos. Can you picture your skin covered with a burning, itchy disease and no doctor available to help you? Do you think you would survive if your diet consisted of only a golf ball-sized portion of sticky rice two times a day? *Seng Lee, a Hmong SDA Christian, does not have to imagine this because he lived this nightmare for five years. He suffered all

this and more because of his burning desire to share Jesus with others. Glancing down at the deep scars on his legs from being chained, he said, "I cannot tell you how much suffering I had or I will begin to cry." Then he quickly looked up, and with a glimmer in his eye, said, "But every day I was in jail I prayed to God." Here is the rest of the story of a modern day apostle for Christ.

Seng Lee was first arrested and put in



Laotian Pastor Houmphanh studies the Bible with Hmong Christians, Seng Lee, Samboun and Khomsao.


prison for one month after being severely warned by the local police to stop preaching. Like the apostle Paul, immediately after his release from prison, he went back to his church family and resumed preaching. This was so upsetting to the authorities they called an important village meeting to decide what to do with him. During this public meeting people made false accusations towards him and criticized his Christianity. People said he was a traitor of the government and constantly disrupted the peace. They tried to force him to sign an agreement that he would return to tribal animism, the accepted religion of the village. Because he would not he received a five-year sentence and suffered great persecution and sickness while in jail.

“I was allowed to weave fishnets during my second year in jail,” he said. “This work helped me buy rice and food.” Seng Lee witnessed to two other Hmong men in jail and they accepted Christ. Many times he prayed for the sick inmates and saw God’s power to heal them.

After he was released he lived in a village near the one where he had been arrested. Incidentally, many people from that former village accepted Jesus as their Savior in spite of watching all that happened to Seng Lee and his incarceration. Mr. Seng continued preaching the gospel and many people once again began to believe. The authorities returned and threatened, “We will arrest you again if you do not stop teaching about God.

You are following imperialist policies.” Because of the severe persecution in northern Laos, Seng Lee, his wife and five children, along with five other Christian families, decided to move to a large city in southern Laos.

On their journey the group stopped in a village. For two weeks Seng preached the gospel and many accepted Jesus as their Savior and became Christians. They then traveled on for many days before they stopped in another village. Once again he preached to the people and many believed in God. After they finally arrived in southern Laos work was very hard to find in the large, crowded city. Men are sometimes able to get jobs as laborers where their pay is \$3.00 a day for ten hours of backbreaking work. This is not enough to feed their families. Yet these Christians are willing to suffer hunger with freedom to worship God rather than stay in their villages where they have enough rice and food to eat but are persecuted.

As Seng passionately relayed his experiences to me, I could tell that he felt, without a doubt, that all he suffered for Jesus was worth it. He is now praying for the Lord to open the way for him to become a full-time worker for God with funds to make it possible for him to preach the gospel to other Hmong communities. He asks you to pray for many Hmong Christian brothers and sisters whom he has brought to Christ. 

*Name is changed for security reasons

Pan Tiem Loves to Witness and Help His Church Members

by Pan Tiem


Pan Tiem, a faithful leader of three churches in Battambang Province, shares his personal testimony. If you visited him in Cambodia today you would probably see him teaching a group of eager Bible students, preaching in one of his churches or giving a personal Bible study. On his “off time” he supports his family of seven children by repairing bicycles in a small shelter on the main road in front of his house. The ASAP stipend of \$25 per month provides just enough for him to travel to and from Beng Village Church and Tapon and Angkam Phren Villages to work as their main Adventist leader.

Before I knew God I was a very selfish man. The power of God changed my life to be a different person who is kind to others. Now I love to witness and tell people about God’s love. I show kindness to them by praying with them about their problems or sharing a little rice with them. They see Jesus’ love through me. This makes them want to believe in Him too.

I have little education and knowledge so I did not think that I was good enough to work for God. But God showed me that I can do a lot for Him, just like some of His disciples who were not that educated. Every

day I pray and ask God to give me wisdom to know how to teach the people in these villages about salvation. Often when church members get sick, they ask me to pray for them. God always answers my prayers and they get better. This helps my faith and their faith in God grow.

I see that God has been with me every day during the four years I have worked for Him. He helps me do His work even though I am a poor man and

life is hard. I thank God that He called me to work as His servant in leading the church in Beng Village and the other two villages. I thank God that I can work for Him with the help that comes from ASAP. God always takes care of me because He is #1 in my life. 



Pan Tiem, leader of three village churches in Battambang Province.

Serving God No Matter What!

by Judy Aitken


When **Bun Chap** gave his heart to the Lord nine years ago, he had no idea how drastically it would change his life. His decision came after completing Bible studies from Pastor Pen Narith, the district pastor of his province at that time. During the first few years after he became a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, he endured persecution from his relatives, neighbors and friends. He recalls how time and again God gave him patience in the midst of being ridiculed and kindness for his persecutors. He often prayed Jesus' words silently, "Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing." God refined him in the fire and as a result, he became a lay Bible worker and leader in

Tropang Pril Village Church in the province of Kampong Chhnang. All who know him say that his character is like gold. They recognize Christ's love shining from his life.

Bun Chap supports his family of five children by planting one crop of rice per year. As a volunteer Bible worker he receives a

small ASAP stipend that is given through the SDA Mission to help supplement his meager earnings. The last two years a severe drought destroyed 60% of his rice crop, leaving him and his family, as well as many villagers, hungry. This setback didn't slow Bun Chap down.

His physical disability does not get in the way of his witnessing either. Despite the fact that Bun Chap's lame legs make it difficult for him to pedal, he rides his old bicycle to other villages spreading the good news of the gospel. Every Wednesday night his neighbors come to his home to learn the Bible with him. Today about thirty-five people crowd into his small, dilapidated bamboo and thatch house to worship on

Sabbath. Considering that the house is seven years old and almost ready to fall down, ASAP would like to help Bun Chap build a new one. This would cost \$500.00 from start to finish. We solicit your prayers for Bun Chap and his group of poor but sincere church members. 



Volunteer Lay Bible workers stand from left to right, Tim Cheart, leader of Srash Keo Village Church; Soy Soeuth, leader of Kampong Chhnang City Church and Bun Chap, leader of Tropang Pril Village Church.

Laboring For God Under Difficult Circumstances

Meas Chey, a successful rice farmer, lived with his wife and five children in Takeo Province. Even though he was not wealthy he was able to feed his family throughout the year. Then one day disaster struck and his wife fell seriously ill. She became very thin and always felt tired. Worst of all, her chronic cough would not go away. Meas Chey couldn't help but worry and he asked many people to help him.

An uncle visited and told him about the true God, then invited him to go to church. Meas Chey joined a Bible class that was taught by district pastor Pen Narith, and as he studied, the Holy Spirit convicted him of the truth. With much joy he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. It was not long before his wife and children joined him in worshiping and believing in the true God. Meas Chey also learned to pray. He earnestly prayed for God to show him what to do to help his wife to be healed from.

He decided to borrow money from his relatives so that he could take his wife to the doctor. The diagnosis was tuberculosis. The cure would be expensive, so he sold his rice land and house to buy the medicine and good food that his wife so desperately needed. Now homeless, they all moved in with his brother's family in Boar Village of Battambang Province. His brother built a small, one room bamboo house with a thatch roof and once again Meas Chey and his family had a place to call home. His

brother was a soybean farmer. Because of a draught that year the soybean crop was very small. There was not enough money to feed both families. So Meas Chey went to work as a day laborer for about \$1.25 per day.


As soon as Meas Chey arrived in Boar Village he began sharing the gospel with whoever would listen. His brother and family were the first to become believers and many others followed. Now, just two years later, thirty people worship God in Boar Village. They have no church so they meet under the trees; no chairs so they sit on the ground. When the rain falls the worshipers crowd into the brother's home. He has asked the help of ASAP to build a temporary (bamboo and thatch) church. A well is needed for not only the people who come to the church but also for those who live near the church.



Meas Chey, leader of two village church groups in Battambang Province.

Meas Chey also shares the good news about God in another village nearby. There are more than twenty believers in this village.

Recently, sparks from a neighbor's fire burning the stubble in the rice field caught Meas Chey's house on fire. Half of the house was burned. He is still of good courage and continues to trust in God, though he lost half of his house.

Today, Meas Chey's wife is feeling much better and is now able to take care of their five children. He continues to preach, teach and share the gospel with all who want to know God. 

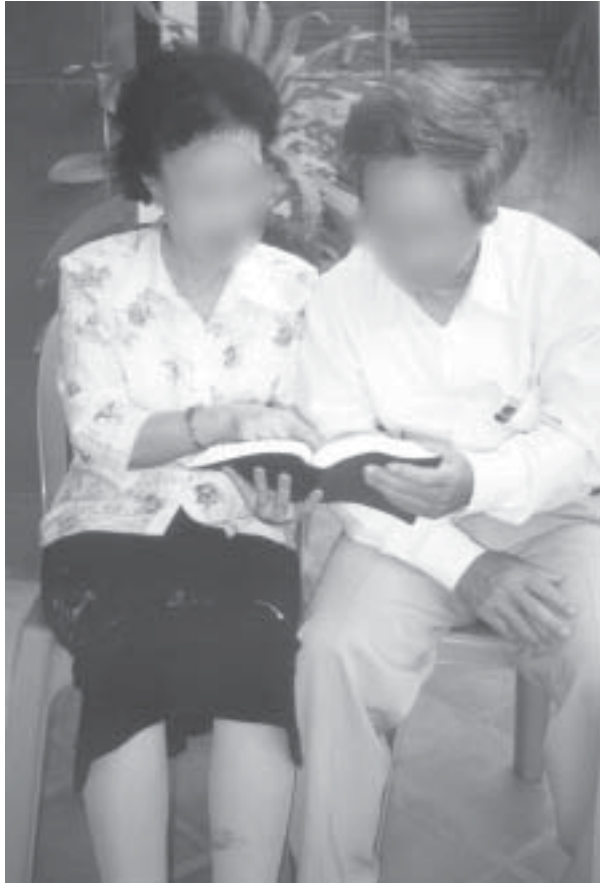
Acting on God's Call

by *Dinh Hang and *Tran Minh as told to Judy Aitken

Take a moment to ponder your journey as a Christian. Did God take you right where you were and gently lead you out of your comfort zone? Have you ended up doing things and going places you never imagined you would? Has He inspired you to set outrageous spiritual goals? Dinh Hanh (wife) and Tran Minh (husband), a Vietnamese Adventist couple that you support through your donations to ASAP, would answer a resounding yes to those three questions. They passionately shared their spiritual journey with me in a personal interview. Read on to see how Christ took them out of their comfort zone to reach His children in an unreached area of Vietnam.

Dinh Hanh comes from a family deeply rooted in ancestor worship. After marrying Tran Minh they both agreed to faithfully carry on their Buddhist traditions. As a result, their two sons became ancestor worshippers as well. One day, two Christians came to buy some books from their successful family-owned bookstore. They planted a little seed of truth in their

minds, which later grew into a strong tree of faith. These two Christians introduced them to the Peace and Happiness radio broadcast. The biblical messages preached by Pastor Isah Young touched their hearts and gave



Missionaries Dinh Hanh and Tran Minh



Dinh Hanh and Tran Minh use their book store to witness to many customers.

them a foundation of Christian knowledge to build their lives on. Dinh Hanh shares, “We learned the good news of salvation. We love God and obey His commandments. We love to worship Him on the Sabbath.” The deep roots of love and faith in God became the central point in their lives. Their former traditions and beliefs of ancestor worship melted away as the husband and wife were baptized as Seventh-day Adventists. Dinh Hanh and Tran Minh replaced the worship of dead ancestors with a worship of the Living God. This transformed their lives in an amazing way.

After they surrendered their lives to the Lord, Dinh Hanh recalls, “Our hearts were opened to the three angels message we heard in the broadcast, that this is the last day church God has chosen. It is our job as Adventist Christians to proclaim the everlasting gospel before His return.” They sincerely prayed that Christ would give them many opportunities to share this message to those they met. Christ answered

their prayers. From that moment on, they had a hidden witnessing agenda with their bookstore customers. Tran Minh shares, “One of my customers is a local police officer. When we discuss current events I often am able to weave into the conversation truths from the Bible. As a result of our friendship, the local police do not harass, imprison or torture us when we meet for our house church worship.”

The Lord led this couple step by step out of their comfort zone and former lifestyle into a challenging yet rewarding missionary life. It all started in January of last year when Dinh Hanh was impressed by the Lord to set a goal to win one thousand souls for God’s Kingdom. She boarded a train to take a trip to a new province with a lady missionary friend from their church. Their witnessing strategy was to pray, walk around the city, make friends with people they came in contact with, then share the simple message of salvation. They witnessed to more than 100 people on their trip. With God’s help, they


raised up a new house church in this area with twenty-two people joining the family of God. Although she considered this experience a spiritual success, Dinh Hanh got discouraged, thinking her goal of winning a thousand souls was unattainable. She remembers, "I began praying for many hours each week, asking God to give me an outpouring of power to spread His word and win souls for His Kingdom."

Shortly after those earnest prayers, God impressed this dedicated couple to close their bookstore and embark on a three month long missionary trip to unreached provinces. With just the clothes on their body and small bags on their backs, stuffed full of Bibles and printed materials, they began their journey. They traveled a lot of the way on a motorbike, at times driving up to 275 kilometers in one day. When they stopped at a town, they would search out listeners of the Peace and Happiness radio broadcast. They found listeners and interested people by going door to door and talking to anyone they crossed paths with. Sermon tapes by Isah Young were played on a cassette recorder to those who were interested. Secret listeners of the broadcast would light up with recognition and excitement when they heard the theme song of the broadcast.

In one village they became acquainted with the chief of police. He warmly invited them to join him and his family, along with many other villager friends to their home for dinner. At 9:00 p.m. everyone started gathering around a little shortwave radio. Much to the surprise of Dinh Hanh and Tran Minh, the Peace and Happiness radio broadcast came booming over the speakers. "The chief and everyone else were shocked that we were Seventh-day Adventist Christians," Tran Minh recalls. They told the missionary couple that they had been listening for more

than one year. Because these people were so hungry for truth and had many questions they stayed two days studying and giving encouragement while they shared Bibles, sermon tapes and other literature. (Materials are provided for the workers through the donations of ASAP supporters.)

In the areas where persecution of Christians is high, the couple enters into public restaurants and markets under an alias of business personnel. They often get invited to spend the night at the homes of people they meet. In the quietness of these homes, the Holy Spirit opens a way for them to bond with the people and then share Jesus with them. Both Tran Minh and Dinh Hanh have been arrested many times having their residency certificate and passport confiscated. They have endured interrogations and have suffered many other hardships during their travels in this new missionary lifestyle, but their faith in God and influence on others continues to grow. When not on the road witnessing, this couple actively takes care of six house churches with more than 200 members and twelve Bible workers.

God not only helped Dinh Hanh and her husband meet their goal, but exceeded it by 200 extra converts. Today, an astounding number of 1,200 new members worship in house churches in eight new provinces, all because one Adventist couple was willing to step out of their comfort zone into Christ's plan for their lives as missionaries. As they reflect on what God has done through them, they never for a minute regret their new life as sacrificing missionaries. I know that as we pray specifically for them and their work God will continue to give them the courage to go on and set even bigger goals for the Kingdom. 

*Names changed for security reasons



Praise and Prayer

Praise the Lord for these advances made for His Kingdom!

- the explosion of the gospel in Vietnam among the house church movement
- for completion of the building of the new dormitory for the Cambodia Adventist School and for many who made the dormitory possible by their donations
- for a new church group of Vietnamese believers that has been organized into a company. This group was planted by Phong Nguyen in partnership with the Houston Central Church, Texas Conference and ASAP. We are thankful to the Texas Conference for taking over this church-planting project.



- for 4,534 baptized members in Cambodia who worship in 131 Adventist churches
- for reports of many pastors in northern and eastern Thailand who have accepted the Sabbath and other Bible truths and are now pastoring Adventist church groups

Your prayers are needed for **Cambodia:**

- for religious freedom to be continued by the Cambodian government leaders
- for the blessing of the Holy Spirit on Cambodian Adventist Mission leaders, district pastors, church planters, lay Bible workers and pioneers. Pray for their courage and protection as they preach, teach, travel and work amidst trials and dangers
- for financial needs for support of: 57 Khmer church planters and lay Bible workers, new church planting projects, temporary churches, wells, rice and other humanitarian projects, education of children, Bibles, Bible lessons and other evangelism needs
- for the Cambodian radio ministry and pastors who are producing it: Sereivudh Ly, Sophat Sorn and Thorn Hean
- for reaching Cambodians in countries such as Australia, Canada, France and the United States

Your prayers are needed for **Vietnam:**



- for the government leaders to grant religious freedom to more than 155,000 people who worship on Sabbath in house churches
- Pastor Isah Young and his wife, Mai, as they work with the assistants, team of workers and church members who produce the Peace & Happiness Radio Broadcast
- that the radio signals will be clear and will continue to be an effective means to reach the 85 million people in Vietnam
- for courage and protection for pastors and believers who are suffering persecution for their faith in God
- for people living in tribal regions of the country, many of whom are being oppressed and persecuted by the government
- for the need of support for 233 district pastors, training expenses for new pastors, transportation, Bibles, religious books, other evangelism needs, house church repairs and food for hungry people

Your prayers are needed for **Thailand and Laos:**



- for political leaders and for the continued lifting of the restrictions on religious freedom
- for revival and unity among church lead-

ers and our small group of members in Laos

- for the leaders and pastors of the Thailand Adventist Mission

- for Mission College evangelism programs led by Khamsay Phetchareun
- for the need of support for ten Thai pastors and six Laotian pastors
- for support to build churches and for evangelism materials

Your prayers are needed for ASAP sponsored church planting in **North America:**

- Vietnamese church planting in Seattle, Washington led by Son Xuan Nguyen and in Orlando, Florida where Minh Pham is working as a Bible worker
- Laotian church planting in Sacramento, California led by Bounyou Kongsaisy and in San Diego, California led by Thongsouay Sakdarak
- for the spread of the gospel among groups of Thai, Khmer, Lao and Vietnamese people who have resettled to the United States

Your prayers are needed for **Adventist Southeast Asia Projects:**

- for guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit as we partner with missions in Southeast Asia. That we will follow God's will in every matter of support and outreach.
- for the power of the Holy Spirit to enable, protect, encourage and strengthen national pastors, church planters and Bible workers in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos



Seng Sam In, district pastor of Kampong Chhnang and Pursat Provinces sits on left as he studies the Bible with lay Bible workers, Soy Soeuth, Tim Cheart and Bun Chap. Pastors, church planters and lay Bible workers supported by ASAP are being used by God to spread the gospel in powerful ways throughout Cambodia.



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