

Kit & Carrie



Written by [Administrator](#)

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In a country that has suffered more than its fair share of distress, Kit Loring and Carrie Herbert established the Ragamuffin project to bring relief to both sufferers and those working with sufferers. Words by Marcus Burrows.

“When we started Ragamuffin it was an idea with commitment, passion, a strategy and action plan,” says Kit Loring who together with Carrie Herbert started the Ragamuffin Project 10 years ago. “Ragamuffin is about relationships – about people encouraging and inspiring each other to do what they never realised they could do.”

The pair first met in 1996, when Carrie was working as a nurse and Kit was running an arts, adventure and education centre for disaffected young people as well as a multi-arts/multi-media production company. Kit needed a saxophone player for a band and another actor for the drama unit. He was introduced to Carrie – a talented saxophone player – by a mutual friend. As they talked it soon became clear they shared a similar vision – the combination of the Arts and healing in Arts Therapy. “Arts Therapy is not just a song and dance or play acting,” explains Kit. “We allow creativity to do its gentle healing work and provide a safe place for creative ‘play’.”

Arts Therapy in Cambodia

“The international work was the result of canny thinking, strategic planning and serendipity,” explains Kit. Carrie had already worked in Cambodia as a nurse and the impression left on her was lasting. At a conference in Hastings, England, Carrie met Glenn Miles, who was working for Tearfund in Cambodia. She knew Glenn from the work she had already done in Cambodia. He asked if they would go to Cambodia if he were to set it up. It didn’t take long for them to agree.

“Lots of people had been asking whether we could come and run training and retreat programmes,” says Kit. “Carrie spoke from the heart and from experience about Cambodia and it felt good and right to do so.”

Creative Arts Therapy is particularly relevant to Cambodia where so many adults have undergone traumatic experiences in their lives. The Ragamuffin Project offers training and retreat programmes that can empower people and provide a deeper understanding of the self and the effect of these traumatic experiences through the innovative process.

“Creativity is powerful – the Arts Therapist understands creativity’s powerful connection with both the conscious and unconscious issues that lead to the debilitating symptoms of distress,” says Kit. Not that the process is just hard work and no play. “Inconceivable as it may sound, we have lots of fun together creating music and drama and dance and

paintings and sculptures, not superficial fun, but fulfilling fun as lives become enriched through this creative enterprise.”

Therapists demand from themselves a consistent and exacting standard of excellence. They have worked with many different people to bring relief to the symptoms of trauma and enrich their quality of life. Survivors of war or natural disasters, refugees and asylum seekers, those who have suffered loss and bereavement, victims and survivors of rape or childhood sexual abuse, and children with severe behavioural problems are amongst those who benefit from Arts Therapy.

Caring for Carers

Ragamuffin provides training for a wide range of organisations within the caring professions. “This commitment to the relief of pain can also cause us pain,” explains Kit. “As we open our hearts to others our hearts can hurt too. Our very sensitivity leaves us vulnerable to being wounded. We need to care for ourselves as we care for others.”

The organisation is involved in three areas of work in Cambodia. It provides tailor-made training programmes for NGOs in the psycho-social sector; retreat programmes for staff teams; and advanced training programmes in the healing arts and arts therapy. Their aim is that those who have completed these courses and gained experience, to then learn to train others and, after training in clinical supervision, to supervise those in practice.

Their retreat in Phnom Penh is a beautiful, serene and peaceful environment with high ceilings. What is so visually striking is, apart from the colourful furniture and amenities, everything is white. It’s subtle in its calm, yet dramatic. Out back there’s a lush green garden to explore. The retreat offers a chance for people to work on and reflect on what’s going on for them.

“Finding a place where you can be yourself and reveal your suffering, that’s revolution,” says Kit. “The arts heal, gently, respectfully, powerfully.”

To find out more information about the Ragamuffin Project email:
ragamuffinproject@hotmail.com

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