Ancient History
Cambodians are rightly proud of their culture. The powerful Khmer Empire, which built the Angkor Wat (above), was the largest empire in Southeast Asia from the 12th to the 15th century. Still a world-famous Buddhist temple in a primarily Buddhist nation, the Angkor Wat is a popular tourist attraction, and an important part of the Cambodian economy.

Khmer Rouge
In 1975, the Khmer Rouge, a communist regime, captured Phnom Penh. In an attempt to turn Cambodia back to "year zero," city dwellers were forced into the countryside to farm on short rations, while many libraries, hospitals, schools, and temples were destroyed. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other educated people were sent to death camps in an attempt to rid Cambodia of Western influence. By 1979 when Vietnam overthrew the Khmer Rouge, the country’s population had waned from 7 to 5 million due to violence, starvation, and mass exodus.

Today
Cambodia is still affected today by the great loss in institutions and educated leaders due to the Khmer Rouge. In many rural areas, lack of simple knowledge of agriculture, nutrition, and sanitation results in high mortality rates for young children, and many villages feel powerless to help themselves. However, there are many organizations in Cambodia such as GCT (below) who are working to educate and empower Cambodians.

Genesis Community of Transformation (GCT)
GCT’s current offices and proposed building site (below) are in Phnom Penh, but GCT has also purchased farmland in rural Cambodia for experimenting with, demonstrating, and teaching new agricultural techniques that improve yields and environmental sustainability for small village farmers. GCT also specifically focuses on education and job training for women and youth, including education about the effects of environmental health on human health.

GCT serves villages near their farm through the CRWRC’s Community Organization (CO) process, in which they train a few people in a village (below) to help their village establish a leadership committee, discover their own resources, and solve important village problems.

Genesis Community of Transformation (GCT) is headed by couple Navy Chann and Ly Chhay, (right) Cambodian nationals who grew up during the Khmer Rouge, then moved to Canada until 1998, when they returned to Cambodia. Navy worked for 10 years for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) as the Country Director for Cambodia. In 2009, she resigned and started her own Non-Government Organization (NGO), GCT.