

Houn Sipha



The fire that ruined **Houn Sipha's** house in Phnom Penh destroyed more than just a building. Her mother was badly burned in the fire. Having no money, Houn Sipha was forced to borrow money from neighbors to buy medicines for her mother. Even with the medicine, it was too late ; her mother later died from the injuries.

Homeless and debt-ridden Houn Sipha, her husband and their four children sold their wrecked home and moved in with her husband's mother. For six years, Houn Sipha lived with her mother-in-law. But her husband's family resented Houn Sipha and her children and made life difficult for them.

Eventually, Houn Sipha found a house for her family to rent near Phnom Penh's riverside and she became pregnant again. However, her husband could not find a job to pay the rent, and when he did have money, he would spend it on getting drunk rather than on his family.

After she gave birth to her daughter, Houn Sipha feared she would have to give the baby away as the family had no money to support another mouth to feed.

"I loved my baby daughter very much, but I thought I would have to give her up to another person," Houn Sipha says.

A local development worker told Houn Sipha about the Hagar Shelter and encouraged her and her children to go there. She then would not have to give away her baby. Houn Sipha took the advice and moved her and her children to Hagar Shelter in 1998.

At Hagar Shelter, she received counseling and took literacy classes and vocational training in sewing. She was able to send her children to school at the Shelter and to have childcare for her baby during class time.



After completing her sewing training at the Hagar Shelter, she was offered a job at Hagar Design and moved into a rented apartment near her work. Houn Sipha's reconciled with her husband and, although he still occasionally drinks, she now has control of the money she earns and makes sure the rent and electric bills are paid, food is on the table, and the children are attending school. "I think their future will be bright. They can go to school and continue on to university one day", Houn Sipha says proudly.

All names have been changed to protect the privacy and security of the beneficiary concerned.