

Som Ratha



When **Som Ratha** was born in central Cambodia in Kratie province, her mother and father were continually arguing and fighting. Som Ratha's mother then gave her up to live with her grandmother. Living with her grandmother was a hard life, because they made little money selling sour cabbage and spices in the roadside market .

During this time, Som Ratha's mother took a new husband and gave birth to a son. After her mother returned to Kratie province, Som Ratha moved from her grandmother's house and began living with her mother's new family. But her mother blamed Som Ratha for the breakdown of her first marriage. Her mother referred to her as evil and started regularly beating her. "My mother thought I was an evil girl and said because of me she had to give my father up and her life changed for the worse", Som Ratha remembers sadly.

Her mother's relationship with her step-father ended; her mother took Som Ratha and her younger brother to live in the city of Phnom Penh. Villagers took pity on the broken family and offered them a place to stay and a small field in which to grow food. Still life was hard and Som Ratha's mother continued to beat her, threatening to sell her as a prostitute.

A staff member from Hagar Shelter noticed Som Ratha and her family one day and told them to go to Hagar Shelter where they could receive a place to live and attend literacy classes and vocational training.



For a time they were happy at Hagar Shelter; soon, however, her mother started beating her once again. So 15-year-old Som Ratha was relocated to Hagar Foster Home where she went to school and was enrolled in sewing classes as part of her vocational training. Som Ratha was a talented student and achieved the highest grade in her vocational training class.

In 2003, after finishing her sewing training, Som Ratha was offered a job at Hagar Design. She enjoys her job at Hagar Design, making silk accessories for women. These days Som Ratha looks after her mother, who no longer beats her and who has since been diagnosed with a mental disability. Som Ratha's grandmother and younger brother also live with her. Som Ratha's says, "I want my brother to have a successful future. I want him to have an education, so I send him to school".

Som Ratha says life can still be hard as she tends her family, but she is proud of her achievements and is thankful for Hagar providing the opportunity to turn her life around.