

## **BSDA and a Wonderful Meeting**

Manuel Garcia and i (and the other 4 people and the driver in a collective taxi) all drove out to Kampong Cham early on the morning of November 13. We arrived to a wonderful meal at the Smile Restaurant -- a social enterprise part of the organization BSDA -- Buddhism for Social Development Action.



In 2005, BSDA was started by a monk who had been criticized by the lay members of his temple for not doing anything to help the people. Ven. Vandong Thorn was shocked into immediate action which included a supplementary education in English, computer and Khmer dancing for 10 children which grew to 1,500! Then came extension in health education, environmental awareness and community building.



On the day that i met Vandong (as he is called since he disrobed) he brought in various members for us to meet. We were able to discuss everything under the sun and had lunch and then set off for the beautiful ruins of a pre-Angkor Wat temple in the



grounds of Nokorbachey. The ruins were truly lovely to see -- they were more interesting than Angkor Wat to me.



Monks from the modern temple



Part of the temple

Then off to the Rice Field Village, a huge project of training schools and future meditation center and so on. At present only part of the training center has been built but the master plan and much enthusiasm -- as well as quite a few donors -- are presently clearly steering the project forward. Vandong intends to set up training programs for young people to learn different skills. Already BSDA is working in many different areas at a grass roots level with village instruction sessions in healthcare and climate change. With the fact that the organization was started by seven monks, all programs draw heavily from Buddhist philosophy. In addition, BSDA is very involved in preserving Cambodian culture. Apsara dance is a central part of



the resuscitation process and the children perform superbly.

Thank you BSDA for a wonderful visit. We wish you all the best!

