

SUSAN'S STORY

It's okay, it's all right...

When you ask me about my children, it's hard for me to answer. I have nine children but one got lost in Cambodia. Kidnapped. In 1995, we arrive here in Australia, eight children and my husband.



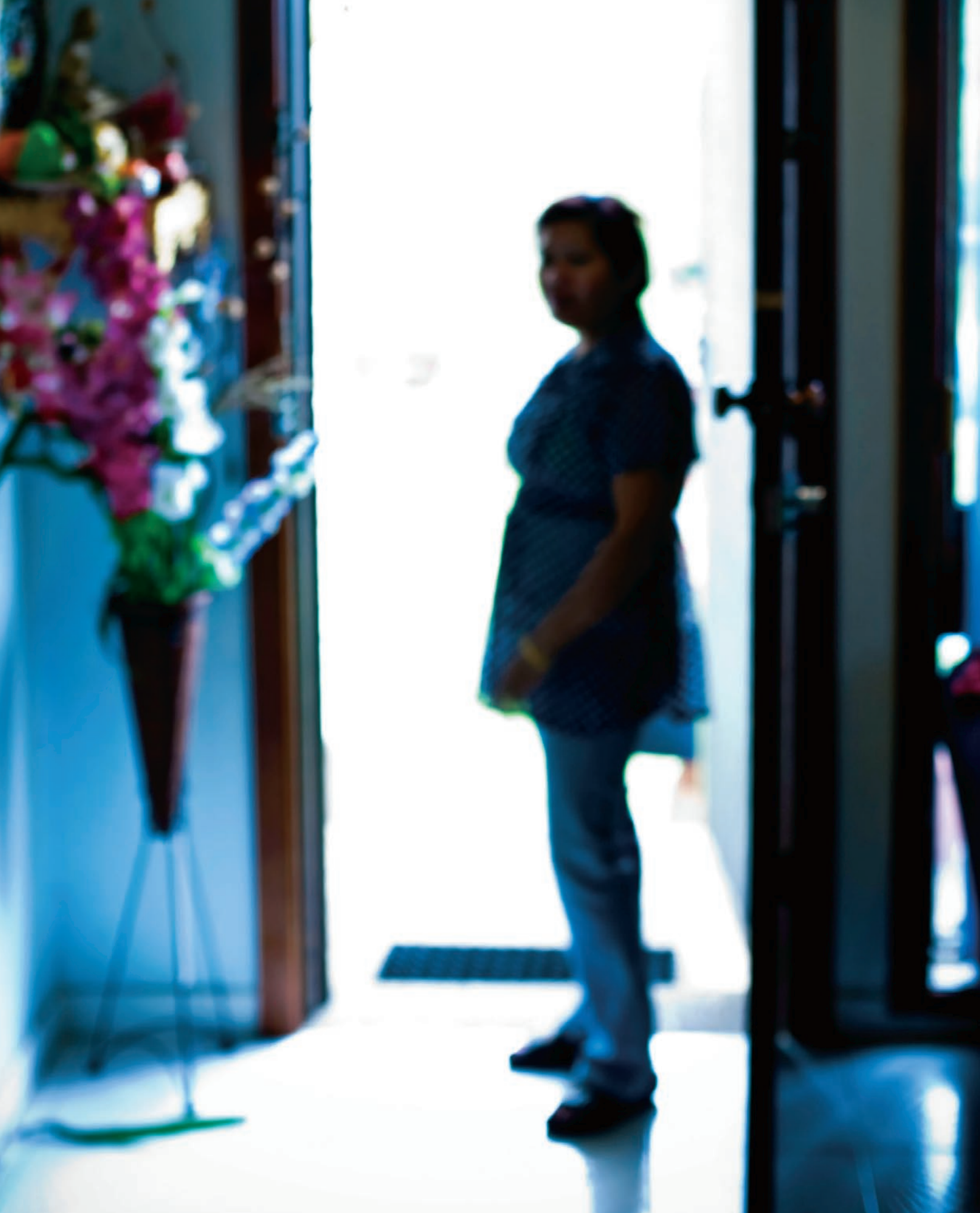


I started with *Moving Forward* when my daughter, Ebony was sixteen and she having problem at school. *Moving Forward* was helping her with a move to a new school. I met Kim San (a caseworker) and then *Moving Forward* was helping me too.

All my children were living in my house with me. I was separated from my husband in 2005 and it was hard. When you are separated like that you don't have support with the children. You don't have the authority – they are not scared of you. I had depression and sadness. My husband went back to Cambodia and marry a young girl and I was so worried. I thought, 'I just want to drink and I want to kill myself. I want to drive into a truck just to finish my life.'

At that time I took the wrong road – I fall into the trap of gambling. I was addicted to gambling and I borrow other people's money. \$10,000. I go to the club and I come home with no money and then I start drinking alcohol, spirits. It was very bad. I was never like this before.

Ebony say, 'It's okay Mum. If it help you, if it make you feel better, you can go and do the gambling. It's okay, it's all right.' But then I was thinking about my older daughter. She's working hard in a nursing home. She's washing old people's bottoms and I feel sorry for her. She working so hard and I exploiting her. I could not continue to do it. So I have to give up the club. I have to give up the alcohol.



Kim San, she supporting me through that all the time and I stopped completely. She visits me and she keeps me on track and helps me. I disconnect from the clubs and the drinking. And she helps my mental state, encouraging me. She help me with my feelings about my husband: she says, 'Don't get angry, stay calm.' And it's better. Kim San often come and talk to Ebony and my other younger daughter too – encouraging them.

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I'm sorry I cry when I talk but I feel better after I talk, I feel better. And I'm happy now. There's five children still with me at home, studying. The eldest is 22, then 21, the next one is 17. The fourth is 16 and the youngest is nine. I have three who are already moving out and with

good jobs. Nursing, studying, apprentice. They build up a name for themselves and they will look after me. My eldest daughter she say, 'Mum, don't worry about buying a house. I will do that. I will represent the family.'

And my youngest, my son, he's good. He says. 'Mum, look after yourself. Think of yourself.'

So I am very lucky. This year I will go to English school again and I know I can have a new life. In 2008, I went to a Cambodian Festival and people see me there who saw me in 2005, they say I am so different. They praise me. They say when they see me before I was dark, that my face is dark. But now since I have help with Kim San, I know how to make myself pretty. I use makeup and I look brighter and happier and they tell me that.

My children and I are very good now and my sister-in-law who sponsored us, she rang me and she said: 'I don't regret it (that) I sponsor you here. Look at your children. You do so well...!'