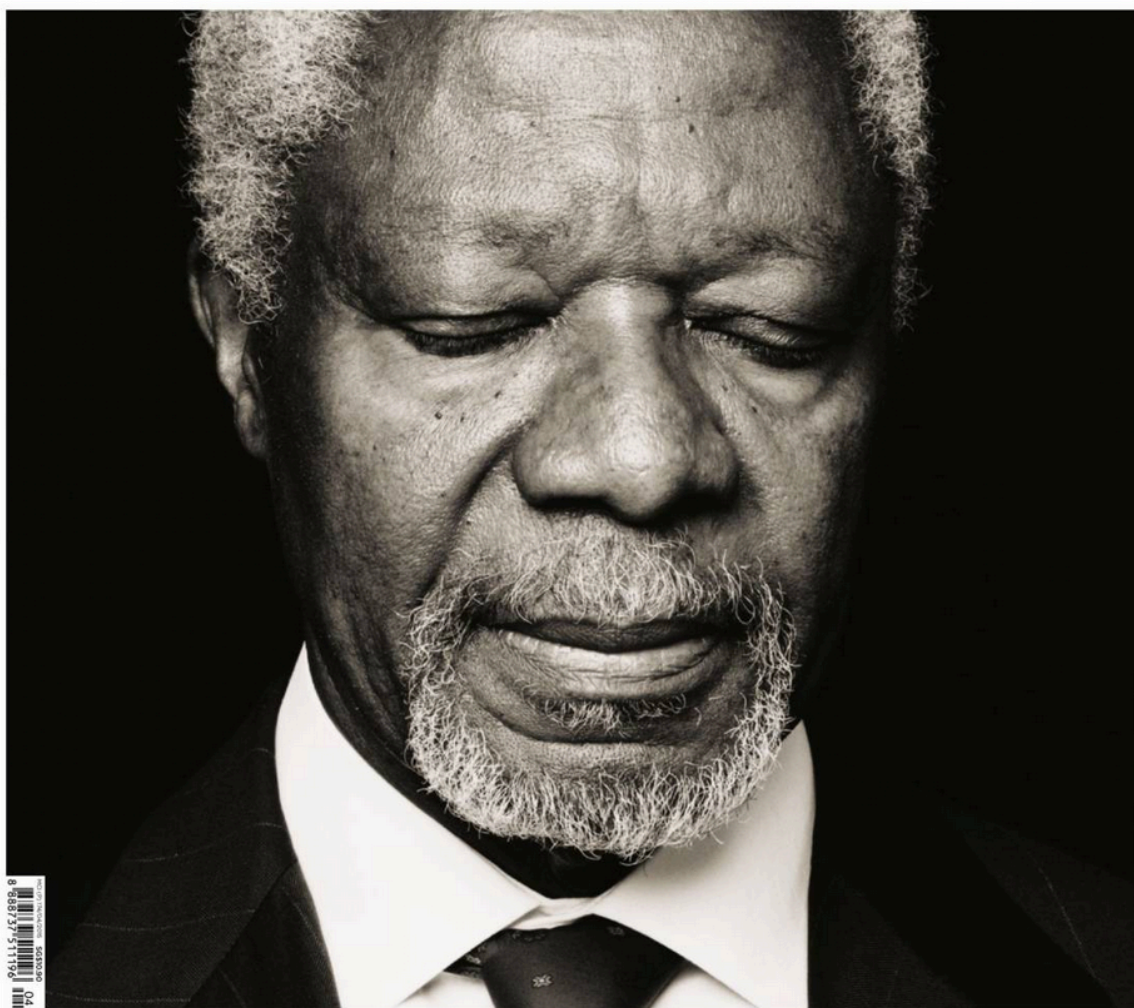


# B I L L I O N A I R E



## THE GIVING ISSUE

EXPLORING THE HARMONY BETWEEN LIVING WELL AND DOING GOOD

**COVER STORY** • Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan on how leadership through philanthropy can change the world.

**THE ART OF HOSTING** • The Billionaire special guide to hosting a great dinner party this festive season.

**PHILANTHROPY** • National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre's Melissa Kwee wants to make giving a way of life in Singapore.

TRAVEL

## Seriously On Song

Founder Rory Hunter describes the evolution of the Song Saa resort with a foundation that seeks to seriously engage its neighbouring community.

by Rory Hunter (as told to Melissa Lwee-Ramsay)

**THE PRIVATE ISLAND OF SONG SAA** was discovered and redeveloped by Rory and Melita Hunter into a beautiful luxury resort. At the heart of the property is an underlying philosophy to engage and give back to the community. Rory Hunter shares with us how the model has evolved from a resort with a great CSR programme into a hybrid entity that includes a resort and a sister foundation.

"When we first started work on Song Saa, we didn't know where the journey would take us. We had no idea what we were going to do or how we were going to get there. What we did know, however, was that we wanted to make sure we could lead by example in that we wanted to create a great product that made for good business but also, from a philosophical standpoint, to develop the resort in a responsible, environmentally conscious way while engaging the neighbouring community.

"Initially, all our non-business activities were part of the resort's corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme but we realised that while the essence of giving back was there, doing all the conservation and community work within the company's structure just wasn't enough. The lesson we learnt was that, ultimately, a CSR programme is very limiting because it is always secondary to the business mission. The question then was how do we make our conservation and outreach programmes our mission? How could we make this the focus every day?

"So what we did was to separate our CSR efforts into an independent foundation; one that is independent from the business but while the relationship with the resort can be symbiotic, it will operate independently with a separate governance. It meant that we could scale the foundation's efforts and work without being dependent on the resort for growth or affecting the resort's bottom line.

"It also meant that we could accept donor funding, be it from guests or other entities and sources. We've since been able to get some wonderful partners such as the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, which is one of our biggest partners and has helped to fund the establishment of a full-sized research centre to manage and monitor the marine conservation work that we're doing. We've also got a wonderful partnership with a group called the International Medical Relief out of the US. This year we actually had 18 doctors who distributed 125,000 vitamins. Malnutrition is a problem, as the villagers have no concept of nutritional diets. We also do a lot of education by making them sit through a lecture before we give them those vitamins.

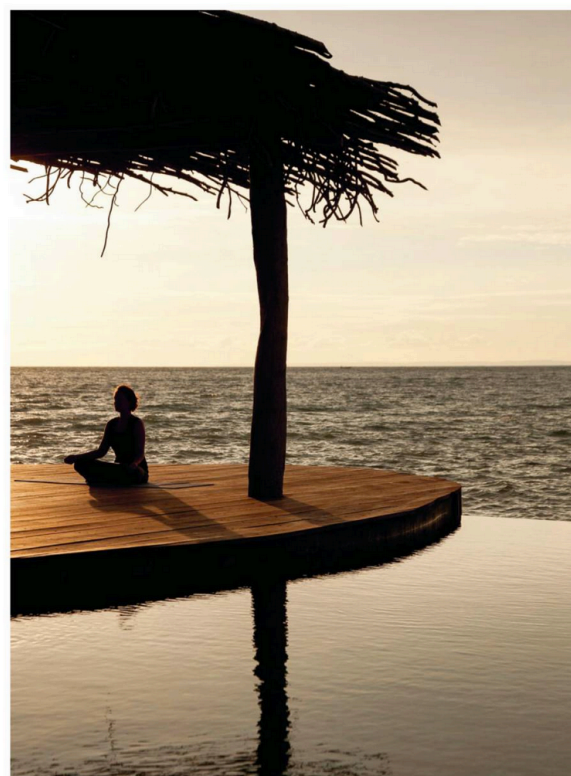
"But, that said, we couldn't have done it without the resort. The resort was a multi-million-dollar project that provided the basic infrastructure on the island. This meant that the foundation can operate out there efficiently with some 90 per cent of the funds raised

going to outreach programmes rather than operating costs. Without the resort, the foundation would have needed millions and millions just to operate. Think of it this way: the hotel is the pebble and the foundation is the ripples that have been impacted by this pebble.

"We're really excited about how successful this hybrid resort-foundation model has become. We're now looking to bring that model to other parts of Cambodia or remote parts of Southeast Asia where you've got beautiful environments but where these environments are under threat and where the communities are disconnected and disenfranchised. We want to weave everything together to effect powerful change and provide jobs, because a hotel offers a lot of job opportunities for unskilled workers: from housekeeping to working in the kitchens.

"It has also helped us to create a really strong sense of identity for Song Saa as a brand. While we don't push for our guests to engage with the foundation's work — they can choose to be as unengaged or as super-engaged as they want — many choose to come to Song Saa because they can experience something meaningful. We're finding more and more people choose us not simply because we are a luxury hotel but because we stand for something and that is truly very special indeed."♡

[www.songsaa.com](http://www.songsaa.com)



INFINITY POOL AT  
SONG SAA RESORT

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