

Cambodian School Project
Progress Report
Spring, 2019

Hello again everyone. Thank you for supporting our project in Cambodia. The dry season is just ending there. It is hot, hot, hot. This is what the land around our school villages looks like. A level plain stretches for miles, with earth berms separating the rice fields. Palm trees are visible to the horizon. By September the rain will really be coming down. When there is water in these fields the new rice shoots will be transplanted there, a most labor-intensive job. Rice is served at every meal. Many families can grow enough rice to feed themselves.



Here you see Sarith at work. He is having quite a good time handing out school supplies and sports equipment at the school we built in his home village. Sarith's father was a forced laborer for the Japanese in WWII. After the war, he and his wife were the first settlers on what was then empty land. Other families joined them in clearing land for rice fields and building homes. Sarith's father was the village leader. Sarith's sister donated the land you see here for the school. Her farmhouse is to the right.

Here is what our project is all about. These earnest children are learning (by rote) to read, write and do arithmetic. Here they are learning a song. There are few jobs in the country. Many of these rural youth will have to go to Thailand or Korea to work. Some of these children live with extended family as their parents are working abroad. They are exploited - hard work and low pay - but better than they can do working in Cambodia.



To recruit students for our technical school, we have to compete with these opportunities for work in nearby countries. This year we were only able to recruit 27 students (our capacity is 40). We again did not have enough interested students to have a sewing class. We will increase our advertising budget for the computer/English class. We are proud to still deliver on the job front. We placed every 2018 graduate. Phat, whom you see here, has been getting



many wedding invitations from past graduates. Weddings can go on for days and are quite expensive. Guests make a cash gift to help with the cost. We hope Sophat's finances survive his popularity. He has built a house about a block from the school – very nice and a short commute. We had a picture of his youngest boy in the Spring 2017 Report.

Here we are at Srey Pou School, 40 km. north of Pouk. Up this road another 30km is Anlong Veng, where Pol Pot died. This northern area was the last Khmer Rouge holdout in the long civil war. Like much of Cambodia then, it was all jungle and small villages connected by paths. Nobody had a moto or a bike – you walked. Sarith told me that once a year his family and most of the other villagers walked together to the closest town to buy basic supplies. It took them all day. They had to hurry to get home before dark, and I do mean dark. There were no lights anywhere. The mysterious jungle they were walking through was most dangerous at night, full of wild animals, ghosts and dangerous thieves.



Here we are at one of the schools we support because it is close to our schools. Over the last few years we have fixed the road, helped get them a water supply and put in quite a nice organic garden. The teachers at Kok Thmei are as dedicated as you can find anywhere in the world. Many have been there for years. Student teacher interactions made it look like any well-functioning grade school in the U.S. Then reality sets in. They work hard, but these teachers are too poor to buy their own supplies with their own money. This school has almost no financial support beyond what we give them. Thank you for supporting this most deserving school.

Here you see one of the last school clothes giveaways. When we could not recruit enough students for a sewing class this year, we lost the ability to make school uniforms ourselves. They cost too much to buy at the market. There is less need for clothing now that people can send money from abroad. We will adapt to the changes in the Cambodian economy so we can continue to put rural youth into local jobs that allow them to support themselves and their families. Aukuhn shahran for helping prepare these kids for life.



