



# HELP + CAMBODIA

## 2023 Annual Report

HELP Cambodia has had another seemingly quiet year in 2023 although there has been a lot going on “behind the scenes”.

DCC currently supports 82 students, 75 of whom are sponsored by generous HELP Cambodia sponsors. A special mention here to the generosity of our only corporate sponsor Tony Tsiolis whose company AstronTech sponsors 20 of our students! This is a huge contribution to funds for our little organisation.

Early in the year HELP Cambodia provided additional money to DCC to cover the cost of school uniforms and stationary items for the students. In Cambodia students cannot attend public school unless they wear a uniform and therefore many students don't attend school due simply to the lack of a uniform and materials. One of the prerequisites for admission to the DCC school is that they attend public school as DCC provides supplementary education to the public system.

For the HELP Cambodia sponsors who elected to be “active communicators” with their sponsored student, regular email communication has been taking place which the students really seem to appreciate and as a result their written communication skills are improving. The sponsors too appear to enjoy gaining insights into the life of the student they sponsor.

The public speaking competitions at DCC continue to help students to gain confidence and skills in speaking English, an important life skill which will no doubt benefit them now and into their future beyond school. Students choose a topic and prepare their speech. Senior students then assist with correcting the scripts before the student delivers a speech on stage. Judges are brought in to adjudicate the performances. Responses provided by participating students indicate that they all felt anxious prior to the experience but they gained a significant sense of achievement and pride at having completed the task.

After a 4 year hiatus we are again taking a tour group to Phnom Penh & Siem Reap for another Cambodian adventure in mid November. We have 13 participants and we are all very excited that the date for our trip is fast approaching. We expect that possibly there may be some noticeable changes particularly in the Steung Meanchey area where DCC is located.

The proposed itinerary for this trip includes visiting DCC as well as the rural village where Bophal has purchased land. We will also take in a number of tourist activities in Phnom Penh. We then set off on a bus journey of approximately 6 hours to Siem Reap. Here we will visit a village where Lotus House runs an elderly care program. We will also assist with a Days for Girls kit distribution and deliver the associated education at Poring Junior High School. Next we will be volunteering at Heartprint for 2 days and of course take in the spectacular Angkor Wat as well as some other tourist highlights. Our final two days in Siem Reap will be spent enjoying the annual Cambodian Water Festival.

A successful Movie Premier fundraiser, screening the movie Oppenheimer, was held in July. We raised \$1,825 to support the HELP Cambodia University Scholarship fund. Since its inception in 2019 the uni scholarship fund has financially assisted between 4-7 students each year by paying the students' uni fees and in return the student gives volunteer hours back to our school. Since 2019 there have been 6 graduates - 2 in Computer Science and one each in Accounting, HR, Tourism Management and Law. There are currently 5 students being assisted in this program.

For the movie fundraiser HELP Cambodia partnered with another local charity, Days for Girls Wagga Wagga, to promote and raise funds for feminine health kits which will be distributed in Cambodia during the upcoming trip. Days for Girls is a global organisation which provides sustainable and effective feminine health solutions and relevant education to girls and women worldwide. As a result of this promotion and awareness-raising of Days for Girls, \$1,850 has been raised to cover the cost of the 78 kits required for our tour group to facilitate a distribution at Poring Junior school. We will be purchasing these kits from an in-country social enterprise called Project G.

Strategic planning has been at the forefront of our communications with DCC manager Bophal Chuon. Bophal has reported to us that he is experiencing a number of ongoing health issues. Bophal has noticed that the need is now greater in more rural communities and made the decision to purchase land in a rural village 30 km from DCC. He has built a simple structure on his land and set up a small store to provide basic grocery needs to the community. Bophal's in-laws are currently living there and running the store whilst Bophal and his family visit the location each weekend. On weekends Bophal has commenced teaching some of the local children who currently don't attend school. Significant attention throughout the year has been paid to communicating with Bophal about the future.

With these factors regarding the DCC founder/manager in mind plus the fact that we are aware of other NGOs operating in the Steung Meanchey area and an understanding of greater need in more rural areas, the HELP Cambodia committee has been considering what the future may look like for our organisation, DCC school and its current students. With the lease on the DCC land expiring in May 2025 we intend to use the opportunity when we visit Cambodia this November to clarify Bophal's vision for the future of DCC. We hope this will allow us to plan effectively for the years ahead.

HELP Cambodia truly appreciates its valuable association with Rotary and the subsequent support provided. Wollundry Rotary continues to sponsor 2 DCC students and another student sponsorship comes from Inner Wheel (a Rotary affiliated women's service organisation).

Special mention needs to be made of the assistance from Rotarian Darren Wallace who is our Rotary liaison person and manages our sponsorship payments to DCC through the RAWCS program. Darren also completed a long overdue upgrade of the HELP Cambodia website last year. - A big thank you to Darren for his ongoing assistance in these areas.

Another Rotarian who has made a significant contribution to our efforts recently is Garth Perkin of Coolamon Rotary who is joining us on our Cambodia trip. Garth put in a huge effort towards our Days for Girls appeal and sourced enough donations from Rotary clubs and his local community to cover the cost of more than 26 kits. A commendable effort for which we are extremely grateful.

The sponsors, supporters, donors and friends of HELP Cambodia plus our dedicated committee are the lifeblood of our organisation. Together we endeavour to improve lives by increasing educational opportunities and assisting with health requirements for Cambodians in need. Every effort and donation made makes a significant difference to our cause. I want to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed in some way. Thank you one and all!



Students receiving new uniforms and stationery.



Bophal's rural land with shop on left.



Bophal's father-in law has helped create a productive garden



Public Speaking Competition