



Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. Newsletter, Issue February 2017

Dear members, dear godparents and supporters,

Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. is currently undergoing major changes. Our long time Country Director Raphael Weyel will pack his bags after more than 5 years in Cambodia and will head home to Germany in March. Claudia Zeidler, who had been supporting our work on a part-time basis since September 2015, will accompany him.



Raphael and Claudia will be dearly missed

Raphael's successor is Michael Dohr, who has started working for us in February so Raphael and Claudia had one full month to do the handover. We therefore want to use this newsletter to provide Raphael with a chance to say good-bye and Michael with the opportunity to introduce himself.

Farewell from Cambodia after five eventful years (Raphael Weyel)

Even though my engagement for Cambodia had already started before joining Kidshelp, which I am planning to stay a part of, my work here on the ground coming to an end is of course a big deal to me.

When I joined Kidshelp Kambodscha in 2011, I had already known the country for quite a while. Starting from 2006, I had been volunteering with Chibodia, an organisation similar to Kidshelp, and I came back again in 2008 to continue to work for them and explore the country.

My decision to leave Germany for good and to go to Cambodia for an indefinite period of time to work for Kidshelp, still caused a lot of joyful anticipation and a healthy amount of anxiety within myself. I was, after all, about to take on a new role and to start a life in a country that is very different from my own. Back then Kidshelp was in the middle of completing the registration as international NGO, instead of handling everything through a locally registered charity. Projects like the midway houses for students were still being conceptualised.



On the one hand, I was not sure whether I would be able to manage everything on the ground on my own; on the other hand, I was certain that many things could only be learned „on the job“ and that I would get things rolling once I had settled in.

Looking back, I have to say that I was indeed fortunate enough to learn a lot and to steadily grow along with my tasks. I realised that I could handle some things better than expected, and because I had to find many solutions on my own, my ability to self-organise got better and better. Nonetheless, I also had to quickly understand that Cambodia often has its very own and unique rules and that some things just take a little longer over here. Successfully improving a project or a certain procedure often takes a couple of failed attempts and including the Khmer colleagues into the planning process is an absolute must. Working in an intercultural team has been a steady and enriching learning process.

The work here was not free of unforeseen setbacks, like the sudden departure of our long-term employee Sen Phakdey, which we had to cope with in 2013. However, I am still quite confident that the projects that I am handing over to my successor are in a good condition. The reason for the success of Kidshelp is the dedication of many different individuals, whom I have had the pleasure of working with during my time here. I particularly want to express my thanks to:

Khemara, our staff member on the ground, who over the course of the last years, not only taught at the school and learned how to manage it, but also finished her master studies in English, raised her children and was a tremendous help in communicating with the families of our students.

André Hömke, who volunteered at our school for multiple times and kept on providing us with valuable ideas and support, even when he was long back at home in Germany.

All of our board members and supporters in Germany and all the volunteers who have been at the school since 2013.

And a very special thanks to Nanette Langfeldt, our first chairperson, who has repeatedly shown tremendous personal commitment to ensure the success of our organisation. Without her continued support, doing impactful work on the ground would have been way more difficult.

And this list is of course incomplete without expressing my gratitude to each and every one of you; all of our financial backers, all of the members of Kidshelp and all of our part-time and occasional aides.



All that remains for me now is to say that I am really happy that we have found a very good successor in Michael. I am certain, that our work will continue to flourish under him.

I will stay with Kidshelp after my return to Germany and support our work on a voluntary basis.

Hence, I am already looking forward to meet some of you at one of our upcoming information events or general meetings.

Introduction of our new Country Director Michal Dohr

Dear Kidshelp supporters,

I am more than happy to be able to introduce myself to you as the new Country Director for Kidshep here in Cambodia.



Michael in front of a painted wall during his time in New Delhi

Some brief notes on my bio:

I am 31 years old, originally come from a small village in the southwest of Germany and obtained my M.Sc. in Development Studies from the University of Bonn in 2012. After interning with the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the

German equivalent to DFID, and having spent two years as UN Volunteer with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in India, I am now more than grateful to have been given the chance to return to the country where I made my first experiences with regard to development work. During my studies in 2010, I was fortunate enough to intern with a Cambodian NGO and to get to know and love Cambodia and its people. After having been in Phnom Penh for a second time in 2012 to conduct the research for my master thesis, I was certain that I would like to come back one day and to join an organisation that aims at bringing about long-term and lasting change. This is why I am very happy to have gotten the chance to return so quickly and to have an opportunity to work very closely to the so called „grass-roots” level, after having spent two very educational but also very bureaucratic years with the UN in New Delhi.



The footsteps I am following in are very big. The mere fact that the organisation has renewed its trust in Raphael for five consecutive years is proof enough. On top of this, him and most recently Claudia, together with many volunteers, the teachers in the school and our other aides on the ground, as well as through the support of our team in Germany, have been able to help hundreds of children and young adults to avail education and to lay the foundation that will enable Kidshelp to continue this good work well into the future.

My goal for now is to internalise the working structures on the ground, to get to know the staff, the students and the school children and to make the transition as seamlessly as possible. I have been in touch with Claudia and Raphael for a couple of weeks already and took part in important events or meetings, even before the official start of my contract in February. During the first half of the year and aside from familiarising myself with the work, I will also make sure to quickly finish all formalities that come with such a change in management and that the school and the midway houses can continue to operate smoothly. Updates regarding smaller projects (e.g. on our efforts to reduce plastic waste at the school), our new volunteers or other fresh initiatives on the ground will surely be mentioned in our upcoming newsletters and on our social media pages.

Finally, a huge thanks to Raphael and Claudia for all the work they have done here over the last months and years. I wish you all the best for the future and the necessary fitness for your upcoming journey, and I am already looking forward to welcome you in new functions when you are well-rested and back in Germany!



Raphael, Claudia and Michael at the last teacher meeting in our English School

With kind regards,

Michael

Your Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. Team in Kambodscha and Germany