



Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. Newsletter, Issue March 2019

Dear members, dear godparents and supporters,

the year 2019 is already more than 2 months old and the mood in Cambodia is very mixed. Growth in the construction and tourism sectors seems to be unrestrained. Phnom Penh, but also Siem Reap and Sihanoukville, are growing at an extreme pace and the number of tourists has also been rising steadily for years. Angkor Wat is one of the most visited holiday destinations in the world. In addition, tens of thousands of Chinese are now pouring into the country every year. Gambling is forbidden in their home country and they have discovered Cambodia as a cheap alternative to Macao. This is why huge amounts of money are being made in dozens of newly built casinos in the Sihanoukville area¹.

This economic boom is accompanied by several negative developments. Anyone who takes a closer look at the construction or tourism sector will soon notice that the profits made there are often not reaching the population. In addition, many projects are completely lacking foresight, especially with regard to environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources. It is not uncommon for residents to be expropriated as part of large projects. The compensations paid are usually inadequate. Environmental or safety standards either do not exist or are not met. Child labour is not unusual.

Agriculture is also suffering considerably. The annual floods that make the central Cambodian basin so fertile have lost much of their intensity due to various dam projects in the Mekong and its tributaries. In addition, due to a dam burst in Laos and heavy rainfall, the floods at the beginning of the last rainy season were very high (see pictures). The first rice harvest in 2018 was severely impacted by the floods.

Fast forward to 2019 and Cambodia is now suffering from a draught due to the fact that the rainy season ended particularly early this time and the overall amount of precipitation also decreased significantly. The first hydropower plants had to be shut down in March 2019 due to a lack of water. As a result, the electricity supply is insufficient. Parts of Phnom Penh are currently being taken off the grid alternately for 5 hours each.

¹ <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/business/number-casinos-jumps-53-2018>

A general remark with regard to the sources: None of the English language media in the country meets the criteria for scientific publications. Especially the exact numbers in the cited articles should therefore always be treated critically.



Fig.1: Floods at the beginning of the rainy season. Three pictures of the rising water directly behind our English school and a picture of the flooded primary school in the village.

Many farmers are giving up agriculture because of the increasingly unpredictable rainfall and work opportunities in the construction or textile industries. The latter employs about 850,000 people and could quickly collapse if international trade agreements are changed. Because of the way the last elections went, the EU is currently considering terminating or amending important trade agreements. This could lead to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the textiles sector.

Whether the general trend in 2019 will be positive or negative will primarily depend on whether or not the textile industry remains stable. Education is needed to become more independent of this sector in the long term. Other industries often do not settle in the country because the educational level of large sections of the population is too low to train them on how to produce technologically sophisticated products.

By teaching them the English language, we give the children a first tool which not only helps them to get a place at university, but also gives them the opportunity to further their education online. The number of internet connections in the country has been increasing rapidly for years. Meanwhile



even poor families usually have at least one smartphone with access to the mobile network².

We therefore continue to believe that projects in the field of education are the most effective way to give local people the chance to improve their own situation.

So much for the background situation in the country where your donations arrive. If you would like to know more or have further questions, please come to our gathering in Cologne in July. The date, time and place will be confirmed after our Board Meeting in April. Current target date is Saturday the 20th of July.

All of our supporters are cordially invited. If you know someone who would like to become a member or who wants to work with us, you are welcome to bring guests along. Please let us know by 15 June if you and number of guests will attend to allow us to prepare accordingly. Please send your confirmations to info@kidshelp-kambodscha.org

Visit of our sponsors from Germany and England

It has become a tradition for our CEO Nanette and a varying number of supporters to visit Cambodia each year in January. In 2019, Patrick, the chairman of Kidshelp Cambodia England, was also there in addition to various other sponsors.



Fig.2: Impressions from our boat ride with the students

² <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/557066/number-of-internet-users-up-this-year/>



Graduation Day 2019

The highlight of these visits is always the so-called "Graduation Ceremony" at our English School. On this day, all children receive certificates that they have completed a level at the school. There are also special awards and prizes for extraordinary achievements. On the stage, which has been set up especially for this day, theatre, music and dance performances take place in addition to awarding the certificates to the students.

In between the different ceremonies and performances, games that make especially the little students go wild are being played. Among the most popular of these games are musical chairs and a noodle eating competition. The highlight for the older students is the speaking competition. The importance of this competition to the students, became clear when we awarded the winners, as they hugged each other heartily and shed a couple of tears of joy.



Fig.3: Students with certificates at Graduation Day 2019

When the visitors leave for Phnom Penh at dusk, the unofficial part of the celebration begins for volunteers, students and teachers alike. Cambodian and nowadays also international pop classics are being performed karaoke or playback style while many participants use what has by then become an open stage to dance.



Fig.4: Traditional dance performance (left) and theatre performance (right) on Graduation Day

A part of the costs for this Graduation Day is financed by the donations we receive from you every year. On behalf of all students and teachers we would like to thank you very much for making this special day possible.



Fig.5: Impressions of the speaking competition and the lucky winners

Dinner and boat tour with our students

In addition to Graduation Day, we also use the visits in January to meet our students. Many of them live in our dormitories, but still rarely see each other



due to different working and study hours. Others are already studying for a Master's degree and have moved out or are sharing flats with relatives living in Phnom Penh. It therefore, makes sense to bring the students together regularly and to promote the exchange with their fellow students and us.

These events also mark a great opportunity for our visitors and the local staff to be able to meet all students in one place at the same time. The speed with which many students develop is often unbelievable and it is great to watch. We consider this as the fruit of your support and our work.



Fig.6: Impressions from dinner with the students

We had two meetings with the students in January. A dinner in a Khmer BBQ restaurant only with scholarship holders sponsored by us and a boat tour on the Mekong, jointly organized and conducted with the students of Chibodia, the organization with which we run the dormitories.

Both events were incredibly well attended and gave our board the opportunity to meet the scholarship holders who joined us in 2018/2019. They in turn had the opportunity to meet the older students, exchange contacts and ask burning questions. First and foremost, however, everyone ate, photographed and laughed a lot. A welcome change in the otherwise oftentimes stressful everyday life between studies, job and the family in the countryside. We think the pictures speak for themselves.



Fig.7: Big laughter during a game on the boat ride with the students

We can finance such evenings thanks to the non- earmarked donations that we receive every now and then from you. Last year, for example, several supporters donated the "income" from their birthday parties. Thank you very much for that!

Reasmey's Trip to Germany

In spring 2018 our friends from Chibodia approached us and suggested to send one of our students to a workshop in Berlin. This workshop is part of the preparation for young adults who are going abroad as volunteers within the framework of the Weltwärts-Program of the German government. For the workshop, the organizers invite members of the aid organizations where the Weltwärts volunteers will be accommodated later. The exchange with the future volunteers is primarily intended to prepare them for the foreign culture in which they will later work. At the same time, visitors from all over the world learn many interesting things about Germany and our way of life.

The reason why Chibodia had suggested to send our student Reasmey was that she did a great job as the manager of the dormitories we run together. She was always approachable, independent and found quick solutions for most problems. We were on board with the idea and after Reasmey told us she was



interested, things took their course. At the end of July/beginning of August 2018, Reaksmey spent three weeks in and around Berlin and experienced a lot there.



Fig.8: Reaksmey in the German Parliament

She was kind enough to write us a little summary of her impressions. In order to keep it authentic, we have not edited her text:

My Unforgettable Trip

I have been to Germany for 24 days to joined seminar and work camp. In the seminar I taught Khmer language to German volunteers who were going to Cambodia and also shared them about Cambodia culture. I have learnt a lot from this seminar about people, culture, and joined class critical whiteness, Trauma, Conflict management, and post colony perspective.

Moreover, in the other work camp which is international work camp in Kiez Frauensee in Heidensee near Berlin. There were many people from other countries like Turkey, Spain, Italy, Russia, Taiwan, China and Cambodia. It was great to get to know them. There were many activities in the work camp such as painting, gardening and visited around Berlin and Potsdam. We shared experiences to each other. Sometimes I feel lonely because I was in the minority of the white



people. I have no experience as they were talking about. They came from different countries but they seem to have similar characteristic, hobby, technology... which is in Cambodia I have never heard and faced it. But I am so excited that I have chance to see this world not only stay in the same zone. Finally, this unforgettable trip that reflect to valuing diversity, differences, conflict, and dilemma make me get to know clearly about myself, my values, strengths, and what I need to improve. I believe there is something more to take me to reach my goals.



Fig.9: Reaksmei with other course participants in front of the German Parliament

More news about Kidshelp and pictures from our recent activities can be found at [Facebook](#) and our [Blog](#).

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