



Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. Newsletter, Issue February 2020

Dear members, dear godparents and supporters,

Here in Cambodia, as with the rest of the world, news about the coronavirus is currently dominating the media. Although we might not fully share the hysteria surrounding the virus, we cannot help but see an opportunity from the hype. Because there is a lively discussion in the social media about protective measures to prevent infection, the subject of hygiene is on everyone's lips. Regular hand washing and cleanliness in the kitchen are suddenly being taken more seriously. We will try to use this increased awareness to point out in our lessons and in discussions with our students that there are many good reasons to keep a focus on hygiene regardless of the real level of threat.

Sadly, due to recent events, a second topic has again come to the fore. We refer to the miserable road safety in the country. One of our students had a serious motorcycle accident and was lucky to escape with his life. At the time of the accident he was, like the majority of drivers in the country, not wearing a helmet. To understand why many motorcyclists in Cambodia do not wear a helmet, it helps to look into the background:

The raw figures show how bad the situation is. In 2019 the Cambodian Minister of Transport stated that, unless drastic measures were taken to improve the situation, [the number of road deaths would rise to more than 3,200 in 2020](#). In 2019, [3,275 people died in road accidents in Germany](#). Translated into total population figures, this means that the probability of dying in a road accident in Cambodia is about five times greater than in Germany. The main reasons for this are the poor condition of many roads and vehicles and the non-compliance with many traffic regulations by the population. At this point, you might ask yourself: "Then why do so many people not wear a helmet?"

Rather than pointing the finger at the police and accusing them of failing to enforce the traffic rules that do exist, we want to focus our attention on the people that we can influence. These are first and foremost our pupils, teachers, students, our staff and their families. Over the next few weeks, we therefore want to speak to them and try to understand why they do not wear helmets. Only if we understand the reasons for people not wearing helmets, can we develop ideas on how to convince the people we work with to change their behaviour.



The pupil involved in the accident is doing satisfactorily given the circumstances. A very big thank you to all who spontaneously donated for his treatment.

Graduation Day and sponsor visit 2020



Fig. 1: Students during the performance of a traditional dance

The celebration of Graduation Day at Khemara Kidshelp School and the associated visit of a delegation of Kidshelp members and sponsors has become an annual tradition. This year almost a dozen visitors from Germany, England and Singapore came to our school.

On the actual Graduation Day, all school children receive certificates for the successful completion of a year at the school. In addition, the best students of each class are awarded with special certificates and gifts. The children can also win additional prizes by participating in various games and a speaking contest. And to make sure that no one gets bored, there is also a colourful programme of theatre, dance and singing performances.

Many thanks to our headmistress Khemara, our compères, the volunteers and all teachers for rehearsing the different parts of the program, the preparation as well as the implementation of the program.

The children had a lot of fun again. The best way to see this is on the numerous pictures of the event. You can find a selection of photos in the corresponding [picture gallery on our homepage.](#)



Fig. 2: Happy students on this year's Graduation Day

New project - construction of a second school

Anyone who follows our newsletters, the homepage and the announcements on [Facebook](#) will have often read that we reinvest all donations and every additional Euro we manage to save, for example through responsible business practices, to achieve the approved purposes of the charity. In concrete terms, this means that apart from the necessary reserves for emergencies and the money we need to cover our running costs, we cannot and do not want to accumulate large sums of cash in our accounts.

Not least thanks to the immensely important regular contributions of our [members](#), as well as many individual [donations](#) from you (for example through fundraising campaigns at birthdays), we have generated a surplus in recent years, which prompted the board, during the first half of 2019, to discuss ways of using these funds.

The result of the discussions between the board and our staff in Cambodia was the idea and the wish to build a second school. The decision for another school project was made because we learned many lessons through running the first school, which we want to make use of in the new project. We are of course also using these insights to improve the first school. There are some basic things that can be done differently from the start when constructing a new building, for example, think of the design of the building. We now have architecture students



whose talent we can use to lead the design process. Solar energy has been around in Cambodia for a long time but thanks to mass production of solar cells in China, it has only in recent years become affordable. In view of the still very frequent power cuts in rural areas, we are planning to include a solar system in the design of the new school building from the very beginning. The same applies to the design of the classrooms or the curriculum of the new school. We want to incorporate the lessons learned from the first school (which will continue to exist and be supported by us) from the very start of the project and at the same time be open for new ideas.



Fig. 3: Design of the new school - space for solar cells on the roof

But these are plans for the future. The saved funds we mentioned earlier, were sufficient to buy a plot of land for the new school and to draft initial plans. The roughly estimated 75,000 to 100,000 Euro, that a new school building will cost by today's standards, will have to be raised in the next step. More on this later.

After the decision to start a new school project was made, we needed to quickly find and buy a suitable piece of land. There was no time to waste, as the construction and real estate boom, which has been going on for years, has caused land prices to rise rapidly. Since it was clear that land would most likely become more expensive the longer we waited, we immediately established criteria for the plot we were looking for and started searching for land that would meet these requirements. This process ultimately took more than half a year.



Fig. 4: Picture of the measurement of the property by the local administration

In the meantime, one of our Cambodian employees has acquired the rights to a piece of land that meets all our criteria and holds the corresponding land title in our name. Such an arrangement is necessary because foreign companies and organisations are not allowed to own land in their own right. However, employees can hold land on behalf of the employer and enter into a contract not to sell these rights in any form without the employer's explicit consent. This arrangement is legal because it is limited in time. This means that the employee who holds the land for us, becomes the sole owner of the land after the period of time agreed upon with him within contract, has expired.

The arrangement is in both of our interest because this employee will become the headmaster of the new school and - just as in the case of the first school - should be able to continue to run the school even if Kidshelp is no longer allowed to work in Cambodia, for example, due to a change in the legal situation. In the event of the employee not complying with his contractual obligations, we may appoint another employee to take his place in the contract. If you have any questions about the new project, please feel free to contact us at any time.



Fig. 5: Design of the new school - front view

In the meantime, we are in the middle of planning and designing the school and the school building. In talks with the future headmaster, the board of directors, the local head of the village and the families in the village where we will build the school, a concept is currently being developed, that is adapted to the reality on site and the wishes of the future users of the school. In parallel, our architecture student Sovann is working on a building design that takes this concept into account. We intend to draw up an initial cost estimate for the realisation of this design with him before the end of the first quarter of 2020.

As soon as we know how much money we will need for the new school, we will submit applications for funding for the project to various national and international donors (e.g. to the national development aid ministries and large foundations). As there are many potential donors and the research will take a lot of time, it would be great if you could inform us, in case you know institutions that support projects in the range of 75,000 – 100,000 Euro. In order to apply for a grant of this amount, one usually has to fulfil a whole catalogue of requirements, which can vary greatly depending on the donor.

If you are familiar with fundraising and/or know where to apply for funds for educational projects, please contact us or send an email to info@kidshelp-kambodscha.org.



Fig. 6: Design of the new school - side view

Before we can lay the foundation for the actual school building, the land has to be filled up and levelled. After the earth has been levelled it should be left to rest for at least a year. Only then can the construction of the actual school building begin. Because the current dry season is the best time to carry out the preparatory ground works and first phase of construction, whilst the application for funds from large institutions can take a long time, we are collecting the funds needed for this first phase in a [crowdfunding campaign](#).

The last few years have clearly shown us, how far talented children from families in need can go, if provided with educational opportunities. We think that examples like that of Sovann, the student we sponsor, who created all the designs you see in this newsletter, are the best proof of the success of our work.

Please share the link to our [crowdfunding campaign](#) or encourage people to [donate directly](#) to our donation account (then there are no additional costs for using the crowdfunding platform).

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

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