



Newsletter

Dear friends and supporters,

In this last newsletter of the year, we would like to look at the past year and thank everyone who has made our work possible through their support. This time we would like to focus on our student project. Of course, this project was also strongly influenced by the Corona crisis. To give you a more detailed impression of the students' experiences, we have interviewed three of them who started their studies last year.

In addition, we would like to point out once again the possibility to increase a donation to Kidshelp Cambodia by 20% via the donation portal [Betterplace.org](https://www.betterplace.org).

From our newsletter in September this year you could see how much life in Cambodia was temporarily restricted by Covid-19. In the meantime, a rapid vaccination campaign has been carried out in Cambodia, in which, according to official figures, 99% of those over 18 have received a vaccination. Accordingly, the numbers have declined sharply since October and are now in the single digits. Even if one takes the official figures with a grain of salt, this coincides with the experience of our friends and collaborators in Cambodia. Almost all restrictions have been lifted, schools and stores are open again and it is possible to enter the country without quarantine, at least for vaccinated foreigners.

Three Kidshelp Scholarship students look back on 2021

Before Covid-19 came along in 2020, each year, Grade 12 students would complete their exams in August and then, in September, Kidshelp would identify potential scholarship students based on their examination results, an assessment test, and a personal interview. The university academic year would then start in November. This model had worked since start of the program in 2010. But Covid changed everything.

During 2020 we had periods of school closure with online study followed by some weeks when Grade 12 students could return to class. Then schools shut again. It was announced that year-end and exams would be moved to December, then moved to January and finally in mid-December it was confirmed, for 2020, all Grade 12 students would be passed without exams. Universities announced they would start their academic year in February 2021.

All these changes meant we had to rethink our plans daily. It was agreed that all students who applied for sponsorship would be considered. It was not permitted to bring students into school for assessment test. First, all teachers except Khemara and Tharith were asked for their individual assessment of student they knew. Students were then asked to complete a Kidshelp questionnaire on 28th December 2020. Finally, Michael Dohr and Khemara completed individual interviews during first week of January. By 11th January 2021, the list of 7 scholarship candidates was confirmed. Kidshelp team had achieved the near impossible and Michael gave assurance that every one of the 7 was a worthy candidate who would have qualified through the pre-Covid processes.

We all knew that 2021 was going to be a challenging year for all students in Cambodia but especially so for those starting their university studies for the first time. We have invited 3 of our 7 scholarship students to share with us, their experiences during this difficult year.

Met Leanghay

During my Grade 12 studies at Khemara Kidshelp School in 2020, I applied for a scholarship to study Information Technology. I knew, if I did not get a scholarship and live in Kidshelp dormitory, then I



would not be able to study further. In January 2021, Michael told me Kidshelp would help to find a sponsor for me for four years to study at Royal University of Phnom Penh (it is the top rated and the largest university in Cambodia). I was really very happy when Michael told me I would be sponsored. Without this kindness from Kidshelp sponsors, I would not be able to study at university. It was my dream.

My academic year started on 29th March and ended 13th November 2021. I will start my second year in January 2022. I live in the Kidshelp boys' dormitory in Phnom Penh. It is not like the two girls' dormitories as there are only 4 of us, so it is more an apartment where we share a large room.

For the whole of this year, we have studied online. It is hard because the internet is often slow, and it is difficult to hear the teachers' explanations. And if we write tests or exam and the internet is too slow and

you cannot submit on time, then you fail. As an IT student I will try and find a solution to our internet speed in the dormitory. Some subjects we would normally practice at university with others but now we must do the work by ourselves.

This year I have been mostly in Phnom Penh living at the dormitory house as I have a part time job at a local coffee shop. When Covid was bad in Phnom Penh I also could not go home to the countryside. I was only allowed to go between the dormitory house and the coffee shop. At that time, it was also difficult because food prices went up a lot. I really like to eat eggs, but the price went from \$1.25 for 10 to \$2.25. Since Covid has reduced, prices are back to normal again.

It has been a difficult year, but we made it and now we hope 2022 is better and I can meet my university colleagues and teachers. Now, I want to say a big thank you to my sponsors and to Kidshelp. Without your kindness, I would not be able to follow my dream.

Vin Daly

I am from Loer Oet village where Khemara Kidshelp School is located. I used to take 15 minutes to walk to KKS. When I was young, I wanted to be a nurse. In Grade 12 I applied to Kidshelp for a



scholarship because I knew my parents could not afford to pay for university and accommodation, for me in Phnom Penh. When I talked to Kidshelp I told them I wanted to study nursing but was not sure because I also thought about studying business. Michael said my sponsor would be happy if I studied nursing, but business was also ok. I was not sure, so I did some research about Business Administration as a major, asked the students who were studying BA and went to school asking for more information. Finally, because of Covid, it was announced that the medical entrance exam would be delayed, but no date was set for the next exam. I spoke with Kidshelp, and I finally decided to enrol on 9th February 2021, to study at Business Administration at PAÑÑĀSĀSTRA University. I also had the opportunity to live in the Kidshelp dormitory in Phnom Penh. It is not yet confirmed but I think my second year will begin in February 2022.

Life as a university student was very new to me. We started with a few weeks of physical classes. I was happy to meet some students and teachers but then the country locked down and all schools and universities closed. It was very hard for me to study online because I had never experienced that before. For online learning I needed a tablet, computer or smart phone and internet. To be honest I had nothing, and I knew nothing about this technology. Luckily in the dormitory, the sponsors provide the student the computers and internet... that was why I was able to access online class and I am so grateful for that. When I go home to the countryside, I must study on my phone or borrow my sister's computer.

I studied online in the morning and in the afternoon, I had a part time job – it was in Customer Service for an internet company. They gave us some training but mostly we just read from scripts. The company was very strict, about Covid - wear mask, keep social distance, wash hand, yes of course always bring and show the vaccination card everywhere I went. After this hard time, we are now in a better situation and schools are opening again. I am so excited to have a physical class again, which started on 30th November. Physical classes are more interesting. Recently, I resigned from my part time job to put all the time for learning.

Finally, I want to say, I will always be grateful to Kidshelp, for giving me and other student the scholarship to study at the university. You have completely changed our lives.

Nov Livuoch

When I applied for Kidshelp scholarship in Grade 12, I said I wanted to study medicine, but I was



worried because it is more expensive than other courses and minimum six years plus two additional years of work experience. Also, I would first have to be accepted to do medical entrance exam and then only a limited number of the students who pass are offered places. I told Kidshelp I would also consider studying engineering if I would pass the entrance exam and be offered a place at Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC).

After Kidshelp found a sponsor and awarded me a scholarship, I moved to the dormitory in Phnom Penh to start studying for medical entrance exam, but that was postponed indefinitely. My sponsor agreed that I should apply for the ITC entrance exam and if accepted, start engineering because medical studies looked so uncertain. I was accepted into ITC in February. My older sister was in her final year at ITC, and we shared a room in the Kidshelp dormitory, so it was all very nice for me. But Covid meant we had to study online. My

first semester at ITC would end in early July. It was difficult as most of the lessons were in French, so I had to study engineering subject and learn French at same time and had to do it online! Some senior students helped us, but it was still so hard!

In June it was confirmed that entrance exams for medical studies at University of Health Sciences (UHS) would be at end June. UHS is the top medical university in Cambodia. I was excited but nervous and was so confused and I talked with my sponsor. There was nothing to lose. I liked my engineering course, and I probably would not pass the medical entrance exam.

On 1st July 2021, I was told I would be accepted to study medicine if I could pay the fees. I was so nervous because my sponsor had already paid for the engineering course, there was no refund and medical studies are expensive. I was so afraid to believe. But my sponsors were even more excited than me and agreed to support my medical studies.

In July this year I transferred from an engineering university to medical one, it has been such a big change. I used to calculate a lot, but now I need to read and remember much more. I think medicine is more suitable for me, it is my dream job.

My first-year studies will finish in May 2022. I hope we will soon be able to start some of our courses face-to-face so I can meet the other students and teachers. But until then I study mostly online at my

family home. My lectures are for five and half hours during the day, Monday to Friday and then every evening extra classes with senior students who support the first years.

I know that without Kidshelp support and belief in me, I would never have been able to achieve my dream. It is the best gift I have ever had. And if later in life I see in my community, someone who has a dream just as I had, and they need financial support, just as Kidshelp supports me, I promise I will support them financially, physically, and mental.

The student project in the coming year

Looking forward to 2022, it has been confirmed that Grade 12 students will not be passed automatically this year but write exams on 26th December 2021 (moved from 6th December). We have therefore prepared a plan, based on exam results being available early in January, to identify and select potential scholarship students for the next academic year. Tharith and Khemara will manage the process and supported by Raphael Weyel (Kidshelp Country Manager 2012-2016), we will publish the details of proposed candidates as early as we can in January. Perhaps over the Christmas period and when preparing New Year's resolutions, we might all think about sharing in the coming year scholarship program.

Donation campaign on Betterplace.org

In our newsletter of September 2021, we pointed out that there is the opportunity to donate to Kidshelp Kambodscha eV, via the website Betterplace.org, which would be increased by a certain amount. In the days running up to Christmas, there is again the opportunity to have your donations up to €200 topped up by 20%. This offer applies exclusively to Sundays in Advent, so you can still benefit from a donation made on Sunday, 19th December.

Since we would like to continue to expand our work for the coming year, we very much hope that some readers will make use of this opportunity to make a donation for the coming year.

We would like to thank you once again for the trust you have placed in us over the past year. Without your help, our work would not have been possible. Also on behalf of our employees on site, we wish you a happy Christmas and a happy New Year.

Your team from Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. in Germany, Cambodia and the United Kingdom.