



Kidshelp Newsletter Easter 2022

Dear friends and supporters,

Even though we are currently in turbulent and for many unfortunately also very depressing times, in which our thoughts are with all the people suffering from the war in Ukraine, we would like to briefly inform you about the latest developments in our projects in Cambodia. In this newsletter for the Easter holidays we report on a successful new edition of our eye clinic outreach at our English school. We also talk about new developments in our student project. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Khemara Kidshelp School 2022 Eye Mission

In our September 2017 newsletter, we reported that Michael Dohr had met with Khmer Sight Foundation (KSF) in Phnom Penh and organised an eye clinic (mission) at our English School (KKS). On that occasion the team of 6 medical staff from KSF, assisted by Khemara and the two overseas volunteers, provided free check-ups to 150 villagers. Where needed, glasses were provided, and around 20 villagers had follow-up cataract surgery on one eye. The plan was to repeat the process in the following years. For various reasons the follow up mission was delayed but was eventually confirmed for early 2020.





But then came Covid and all KSF missions were put on hold. Throughout, Kidshelp Cambodia – England continued to stay in touch and supported by DHL UK, shipped regular consignments of good quality, especially children’s, used glasses for reuse in Cambodia.

In 2021 as Covid restrictions were being eased, it was agreed with Sean Ngu, the founder of KSF to arrange a mission at KKS in early 2022. We agreed a date of 2nd April, which would allow time to monitor progress of Covid Omicron variants but also for Kidshelp to prepare. We decided we would recruit and train up to 12 of our scholarship students to support the mission. The idea was the students would know many of the patients, would be able to do translations for the KSF team, many of whom are not Khmer speakers, and our students would have the opportunity to learn new skills. It was also an opportunity for our students to support the work of Kidshelp.

We first needed to draw up a comprehensive MOU between Khemara Kidshelp School and Khmer Sight Foundation to ensure there were no future legal issues around roles and responsibilities. It had to be clear that volunteers were operating under direction of KSF. Once students were contacted individually, there was no shortage of volunteers, and all committed to participate in a morning training session at the KSF iClinic in Phnom Penh on 19th March.



The training session was a great hit with all volunteers learning the basic eye tests, what to expect on the day, the administration forms and of course 'getting to know each other', meeting the KSF team and of course getting kitted with KSF t-shirts.

Three of our volunteers who are studying medicine or pharmacology at University of Health Sciences also volunteered to assist an international team of visiting eye surgeons between 24th and 26th March. The three learned additional skills around blood pressure, blood sugar and eye pressure testing. Skills they will use in their everyday professional lives in the future.



In the days running up to 2nd April, Khemara worked extremely hard to invite around 200 villagers from the immediate area around KKS and Tharith extended an invitation to the Village Chief of Rokakoung, where we plan to build a new school in the future. The Village Chief arranged for 12 villagers from the area to attend the mission at KKS.

On the day we started eye tests at 8:00am with the 12 strong, Kidshelp volunteer team and the 8 KSF team working as one.

Initial analysis of findings was quite staggering. Of the 212 patients screened, 94 will be invited to be re-examined at KSF iClinic, in Phnom Penh as it was recommended that they would experience positive improvement in vision if they underwent either cataract (84) or pterygium (10) surgery. 7 will be invited to be re-examined at KSF iClinic as they appear to potentially have other eye problems that require attention. In addition, 256 sunglasses and 79 prescription reading glasses were distributed.

Next will be to contact each of the identified patients to arrange for groups of around 15 to 20 to visit KSF iClinic to confirm if they need and agree to undergo surgery. The review includes blood pressure and blood sugar tests as those impact the ability to undergo surgery. A group of UK based eye surgeons will visit Phnom Penh in mid-May under leadership of Prof Sunil Shah, and it is hoped that all cataract surgeries, can be carried out at that time. Pterygium surgeries would be carried out in the months following.

The Rotary Organisation has committed with KSF to fund cataract surgeries as well as the initial dose of post-surgery medication. Kidshelp Cambodia – England have committed to fund the pterygium surgeries and repeat medication required in addition to the logistics of getting around 100 patients, in smaller groups, to Phnom Penh for up to 3 visits each. The Kidshelp costs will depend on exact numbers but is likely to be in excess of \$4,000. If you are interested and able to support this initiative, please contact the Patrick@kidshelp-kambodscha.org but be assured between Rotary Organisation, Khmer Sight Foundation and Kidshelp Cambodia – England, we are committed to doing what we can to help improve the eyesight of every one who agrees to be treated. Although medical care of the community has not previously been a focus of Kidshelp, the direct benefits to the children and families of those they care for cannot be overstated. Already just in providing reading glasses and sunglasses to protect their eyes, we have made a huge difference to many lives.

We asked some of the volunteers for their comments on the training session, their work experience, and the actual eye mission. Here are a few of the comments:

"It was such a great moment to volunteer at KKS today, I experience a lot about working with teams and working with patients especially elderly. Some patients needed to wait a little bit long but I could see they were all happy, They really loved their glasses. All volunteers and doctors worked so hard and they did their tasks pretty well. Thank you KSF for organizing this amazing event for letting my villagers to have a better eyes-sight and also give me a chance to gain some life experience."

"It was great for me to be a volunteer; it makes me feel enjoy for this event. I get a lot of experiences from it by working in teams especially with our patients, they look like excited when they were waiting, although it took a little bit long time. Mostly I saw that they really, really loved their glasses. Today we all worked so hard but were happy with our work, just to see the grandma and grandpa smiles, gave us more powers. Finally, I want to say thanks to KSF and KKS school for organizing this event, it was wonderful to see my villager's smiling because they got the eyes-sight. The doctors were very friendly, and I saw some of them try to use Khmer language with their patients. As a Cambodian, I am so proud of all of you, I only can say thanks to all of you for helping us. I want to tell you that today I get a great experience in my life. It will remember it always".

"I'm glad to do the volunteering job, I know more about eye problems, and I can use my knowledge to educate people. Especially, we also have some fun with teamwork, they're all kind and helpful. Actually, I really like this".

"It is such a super nice and valuable experience to have since I also have eye problem. We have worked so hard today, but for me it is an extremely joyful day. We have connected to each other so well. I cannot wait for this such a precious moment to work once again".

And a note from KSF

"Wonderful support and we hope to have more of your students / team to join us as a family during the missions.

Can you also think about starting an internship for optometrist and theatre scrub nurses for your students? This can open more employment opportunities for them"

Sincerest thanks to all the volunteers, Khemara, Tharith, those who cleaned the school before and after the mission, all at Khmer Sight Foundation and all those who gave encouragement as we worked towards the mission. And a special call out and prayers to the KSF founder who is currently on medical leave in London.

New Kidshelp Dormitory

As many Kidshelp scholarship sponsors will know, we previously operated two girl's dormitories, which we shared with Chibodia. Since Chibodia has withdrawn their scholarship programme, Kidshelp will from April 2022, operate the two dormitories alone. The smaller of the dormitories was in poor maintenance condition and the landlord was unwilling to do repairs whilst insisting on increasing the rent, so we decided not to renew the lease. We currently have 24 female students in our dormitories and have been under pressure from authorities to limit numbers to maximum 15 students in each dormitory.

We considered finding a second dormitory near Norton University, but we could not find any suitable accommodation. Tharith eventually found a suitable location to accommodate up to 15 girls and at same rental as the previous property. It is approximately 100 meters from the existing larger girl's house.

We moved into the new house on Friday 27th March 2022 and all the girls were very excited to see the new house. The girls assisted by 'volunteer' boys from school days, spent most the day moving everything from the old dormitory to the new premises. It was a tough day, but everyone did take and enjoyed a shared lunch break.



It was also time to appoint a new house manager as the existing manager had graduated and had left. Chhan Sreyoun was unanimously elected with Yon Chhunhorn continuing as house manager of the larger dormitory. The managers are responsible for preparing the cleaning schedule, making sure that the houses are clean, collecting contributions for electricity and participate in monthly meeting and escalating issues to Tharith. The managers are rewarded with a small salary and cost for gasoline.

We are working on the new contract for the big house and connecting WiFi for both houses.

Kidshelp scholarship students who do not have family in Phnom Penh and wishing to stay in the dormitory are charged €450 a year to cover rental, insurance, WiFi, equipment, and maintenance for which Kidshelp are responsible. Students contribute to cover electricity and provide bedding and food.

Kidshelp scholarship graduate joins team at La Plantation, Kampot

Many of you will be aware that to help raise much needed funds, Kidshelp has over the years, sold Cambodian pepper and silk scarves at various Christmas Markets and direct to members. We have in the past, been fortunate that visitors to Cambodia have bought pepper back from their travels and donated it to Kidshelp. Before our last trip to Cambodia, in the months before Covid, we had contacted the owner of La Plantation, the largest pepper farm in the Kampot region of Cambodia with a view to establishing an ongoing relationship. In January 2020, four of our members visited and met Guy and Nathalie Porrè the owners of LA Plantation. They arranged a visit and we learned of their history, pepper growing, their EU accreditation, their development of organic farming methods, food quality standards and were offered pepper for sale at their wholesale prices before enjoying lunch as the owner's guests.

By late 2020 our stocks of pepper had been sold and with no visitors travelling to Cambodia and most markets in Phnom Penh closed, we contacted La Plantation and Guy confirmed our wholesale prices and agreed to deliver supplies to DHL in Phnom Penh. These transactions have been repeated a few times since, ensuring that no requests for pepper were declined, although with Christmas Markets shut over the last two years, we have had to rely on word of mouth and repeat orders.

Imagine our surprise when we recently saw a photo posted on social media, by one of our students who graduated from our school at end 2015 and we learned she had just joined the staff of La Plantation as a Food Quality Engineer. Chan Pisal (Sal) Nov, graduated in 2021 from Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC) with a degree in Chemical Engineering and Food Science. Sal is fluent in Khmer and English and has everyday fluency in Chinese and can find her way around engineering terms in French. When contacted for permission to mention La Plantation in our newsletter, Guy confirmed he was of course happy and confirmed that Sal is in charge of Green Eco, their waste management project.



Sal is a true ambassador for Khemara Kidshelp School and the Kidshelp Scholarship program. CONGRATULATIONS to Sal but also to La Plantation for recruiting one of our students and even without knowing, demonstrates how together, we can build a stronger and better Cambodia.

Anyone needing pepper for their own use or as a birthday, anniversary, Christmas or just an everyday thank you gift, please drop an email to nanette.langfeldt@web.de. Remember all funds go to help the work of Kidshelp.

Thank you for your support and interest in our work. For the upcoming Easter holidays we wish all our friends and supporters a nice and relaxing time.

Your team from Kidshelp Kambodscha e.V. in England and Germany.