

Growing Cambodia Newsletter



June 2021

Welcome

Dear Growing Cambodia Supporters

It is normally this month when we all get together for our major fundraising event – Trivia Night! Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, Trivia Night will not take place. We have, however, put together this Newsletter to update you on the news from Cambodia and our schools. We also ask that you consider supporting us in a different way this year to allow our Cambodian students to continue their education.

What's happening in Cambodia?

Unfortunately, after appearing to escape the worst of COVID-19, on February 20 this year, Cambodia experienced a major outbreak in Phnom Penh. As a consequence, large parts of Phnom Penh, as well as other areas, have been in lockdown as daily cases exceed 1000.

Many markets have been closed in an attempt to stop the spread with the government delivering food parcels to families instead. Schools have been closed since Khmer New Year (April). For those that have visited Siem Reap (the major town near our schools), it is at the moment a ghost town.

According to our manager, Sopheak Phay, 99% of the restaurants are closed. There is no music coming from Pub Street and accommodation places are empty. The only good news is that the Government is using this down time to rebuild the roads in and around Siem Reap as well as cleaning up the river that meanders through the town. It looks like a long road ahead for our Cambodian friends.



CUPS OF COFFEE REGULAR DONATIONS

Why not consider donating the cost of one, two, three or even four coffees on a regular monthly basis. Set up a monthly donation to Growing Cambodia's bank account and email us so that we can also send you a receipt.



Teaching staff at Oroluos

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Donations to Growing Cambodia

All donations to Growing Cambodia are tax deductible. We ask that you consider either making a one-off donation, a donation for a specific cause and/or a regular monthly donation.

As we are not holding a Trivia Night this year, you may like to donate what you would have spent!

Our bank details are:
Growing Cambodia Inc
BSB: 633000
Account: 150148583

Please then email us at enquiry@growingcambodia.org.au and we will send you a receipt.

Please see other ways to help on the last page of the newsletter.

Extracts from the 2020 Activities Report

Every year we publish an Activities Report together with our Financial Statements. We have included extracts from the 2020 report below as a lot of the information is also relevant at the moment.

“This is the seventh Annual Report for Growing Cambodia Inc. and as for many others around the world, the effects of COVID-19 have resulted in interesting challenges for our organization.

The principal activities of Growing Cambodia did not change during the last year. We continued to support the provision of English lessons in four rural villages. Three of these villages are located near Siem Reap.

The English classes would not have been possible without the local managers and teachers at the schools helping Growing Cambodia deliver the lessons. Many, many thanks to:

Mr Sopheak Phay, Ms Vattey Ouch, Mr Sovann Kay, Ms Narim Sun, Ms Phally Soy, Mr Nith, Ms Ratha, Ms Rathana, Ms Sem Reaksa, Ms Samphoas, Mr Chanthorn, Ms Rany Chhoerng, Mr Oudorm and to our other teachers who left during the year.

Since March 2020, classes have not been conducted at the schools due to restrictions and rules put in place by the Cambodian Government in response to COVID-19. (Normal classes resumed in October 2020.)

To support our teachers through these difficult times, we have continued to pay them 50% of their normal pay. Our two managers have also taken a pay reduction.

The wonderful news though is that from July 2020 the teachers have taught the students in small groups in their local villages – an amazing effort which shows how dedicated our managers, teachers and students are. Hopefully, all will return to normal classes at the schools soon.

We are fortunate that we have such a very dedicated and hard-working team devoting themselves to teaching fellow Cambodians. Growing Cambodia pays the monthly salaries to our schools’ manager – Mr Sopheak and our local accountant Ms Vattey Ouch and the eleven teachers. The wages paid to our managers and teachers are then spent locally which further supports local business and the local economy.

The “Fill the Bag” campaign, launched to enable poorer students to attend or stay at government schools, continued this year with 65 students being provided with scholarships. This program has been supported by the fundraising efforts of supporters in the US and coordinated by Peggy Newton. Thank you so much to our friends in the US – we are thinking of you all.

Unfortunately, our hugely successful Trivia Night was cancelled this year due to COVID-19. As a result, our major source of fundraising disappeared. We did hold a “virtual” raffle and other supporters donated and over \$15,000 was raised.

Thank you to the volunteers who gave up their valuable time to assist at one or more of the four schools in Cambodia as well as other volunteers involved both in Australia and Cambodia with the making and distribution of Days for Girls Kits to the girls in the village. Thank you to Deb Kerry for coordinating the volunteers.

Last, but not least, thank you to the Committee for your efforts and advice – in particular, Secretary, Nola Kemp who is retiring at the AGM. Nola has been an incredible worker for the organization and always puts her hand up to help. Nola’s organizational skills, passion and dedication to the cause have been such tremendous assets for us to take advantage of. We wish you all the best Nola, but we know you will not be far away!!”

Operational Update

Sopheak and Vatthey and Ms Ratha have been doing a wonderful job organizing classes in the villages after all schools were closed again in April. They also continue to attend to all the administrative matters including lodgment of detailed NGO forms with the Cambodian Authorities. These details are necessary for the local Growing Cambodia Organisation NGO to continue to hold the school licences.

The lodgments are a new requirement and have taken Sopheak and Vatthey a considerable amount of time to get everything in order. It is fair to say that our managers are self-sufficient as to the running of the schools and attending to payment of all expenses including University fees. There is minimal involvement required from Australia from an Operations viewpoint which is the way it should be!



Koy Meng classes during COVID-19 restrictions

Financial Update

After discussions with our Cambodia managers, the decision was made in March 2020 that it was unsustainable to continue to pay our teaching staff full wages for an unspecified time and that we would continue payment at a reduced rate.

The majority of our teachers were paid 50% and our management staff 80% of their regular salaries. Management were given tasks to complete including data on student numbers and outcomes. From April through until October, salaries were paid at the reduced rates. Schools were closed again for December so reduced salaries were again paid. They reopened again in January 2021.

The Cambodian teachers quite quickly established small home-based group lessons for some of their students throughout the periods of closure. Throughout the periods of closure, no additional payments were made for school materials or services.

Smart TVs were purchased for Oroluos, Beng and Koy Meng. They are being well used at Oroluos and Beng and have been of great assistance to the teaching staff. Koy Meng are planning to purchase locally, and this process is underway. Thank you to those who have contributed directly to have these made available to our students.

University studies have also resumed, and fees have been paid for four of our teachers to continue their studies.

As you would be aware, it has been a lean year as far as income is concerned with our inability to hold our regular fund-raising activities. However, many wonderful donations from our regular and new donors have continued to be received.

Whilst our regular fund-raising activities have been curtailed, we have to make mention of the indefatigable Glenda (and family) who have been holding their famous and successful garage sales.

Thanks also to Nola and Deb who have been mask making throughout COVID-19 with several deposits being made throughout the year.



Koy Meng students receiving their "Fill the Bag" sponsorship

Ways You Can Help

One-off Donations

We ask that you consider either making a one-off donation for a specific cause and/or a regular monthly donation. As we are not holding a Trivia Night this year, you may like to donate what you would have spent!

Cups of Coffee Regular Donations

Why not consider donating the cost of one, two, three or even four coffees on a regular monthly basis. Set-up a monthly donation to Growing Cambodia's bank account and email us so that we can also send you a receipt.

University Scholarships

At present, we have four students attending University. The percentage of secondary students going on to obtain University degrees is extremely low. You can help a student attend a University in Siem Reap and give them an opportunity to obtain qualifications that will help them earn a higher income. The cost to support a student at University is between \$700-\$1,000 per annum.

"Fill the Bag" Sponsorships

You might also like to contribute to a sponsorship that allows poorer students to attend a government school. Without this support, these children would not receive any education whatsoever!

The cost to "Fill the Bag" of one student and send them off to school for one year is \$70.00 – this includes the cost of a uniform, a school bag, an exercise book and other stationery.

Sponsor a Teacher or a School

If you would like to assist on a larger scale you may consider sponsoring the wages of one of our teachers or even sponsoring one of our 4 schools. Please contact us for further details.

All donations to Growing Cambodia Inc. are tax deductible.

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"Encouraging a better more sustainable quality of life"