The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

www.sharingfoundation.org

CARING FOR CAMBODIA'S CHILDREN

SPRING 2019

Welcoming Eight Children

By Ann Trudeau

The Roteang Children's Center has taken in eight new children! These children were referred to us from Friends International, a much-respected Non-profit organization that has been helping the most impoverished children of Cambodia survive and learn new skills since 1994. If you have been to Phnom Penh, then there is a 99% chance you ate at their famous restaurant "Friends" where the children taken off the street learn to cook, serve and clean.

> "These eight young children are breathing new life into RCC.

Elephant and Chanthan welcome seven of our new children

TSF has been well aware of the good works of Friends, but had not had reason to work more closely together until recently when Pov Socheat, one of our teenaged girls, wanted to go to their beauty salon school. As this was facilitated for Socheat, Elephant developed a relationship with staff at Friends and they were able to see that we care deeply for each of our children on an individual basis. As a result they requested that we help them to support some children who they could not accommodate.

Here's a quick introduction to our new residents.

Dy Bopear is five years old and an adorable little boy. We do not know if he has any brothers or sisters, but do know that his parents left him on the street because they were unable to care for him as a result of their drug use.

Soriksa is five and her sister, Sonita, is three. Their family surname is Eang. Another pair of sisters, perhaps with some Chinese ancestry, are Sreynhanh and Sreyleap Eng. We estimate their ages to be one and three years old. Like the Eang sisters, their parents have been sentenced to prison for a long time. And, yes, a third pair of sisters have joined us! Sreypich and Sreyrath, surname Moun, are also three and one years old respectively. Their parents are in a drug rehabilitation center.

But wait! There's more. No sooner had we hired new staff, prepared new beds and introduced our new children, then we were introduced to just one more little boy who needed us. Mom Cheb's story is like the others, but now he has found a home at Roteang for as long as he needs one. They estimate his age at three.

All of these children have at least one parent; they are not "orphans" by definition. However, they do not have parents or family that can care for them at this time. The Roteang Children's Center can offer support and nurturing care to each of the children for as long as is needed.

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Introducing the "Roteang Children's Center"!

The TSF Board of Directors has made an official decision to change the name of the Roteang Orphanage to the Roteang Children's Center (RCC). The name change more clearly reflects the nature of the population we serve. Our goal is complete transparency about the nature of our programs and we do not want to mislead people into thinking all of our children are orphans. Elephant estimates that about 25% of our children have a living parent. When the children grow into adolescence, questions about identity often arise. Elephant and his staff search for birth families as a regular part of their job function and sometimes the results are good and sometimes they are difficult. Some families do not want to see the abandoned child again, and occasionally we can find no trace of the family. However, we have resettled five of our oldest children back into their birth families, offering monthly compensation based on an agreement of the type of support we expect for our kids. The children can contact the orphanage, oops, the children's center, and we continue to offer them education and vocational support should they want it.

Meet Chanthan, our Children's Center Director

By Deborah Nelson

On a sunny day in January, TSF's Colleen Gearns sat down with Chin Chanthan to interview her about her new role as Head Nanny. Elephant sat in on the interview to translate. Relaxed and engaging, with a ready smile, Chanthan was eager to tell us about her work with the children. From time to time, she smiled as she watched and heard the bustle of busy life at Roteang Children's Center. Below are her responses:

How long have you been with TSF?

For nine years. I arrived here before my sister (Chin Chanthorn) by three years. Now we each have our jobs at Roteang, me as head nanny and she as education co-director.

Chanthan is well loved by the children

What are some of your challenges as head nanny? *(In response to this question, Chanthan responded in a way that will sound familiar to parents and caretakers all over the world.)*

It's difficult to talk to the kids sometimes, sometime they do not listen!

How do you keep track of all the kids? *(Again we suspect that parents everywhere can relate to the sending off of their kids to school with reminders and instructions and then checking back in with them at the end of their day!)*

If someone like to do a thing…Give them a way… to do that. In the morning, the nannies prepare the instructions, and

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In September, Elephant took many of our RCC residents and staff on the annual field trip. This year's destination was the Preah Vihear temple, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2008. It is an ancient Hindu temple built during the six century long Khmer Empire and sits atop a 1700 foot cliff in the Dangrek Mountains – a spectacular setting. The kids were able to learn about their culture and have a little holiday away from home.

Welcoming Eight Children

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The Sharing Foundation has had experience with children of prisoners before. We had three boys, sponsored by the Tricon Church of Concord, MA, whose mother was jailed. They were taken to visit her regularly, and were eventually released back to her care. They have been through our high school and university programs and have done exceedingly well. We still have a young girl at the children's center who is taken by a staff member to visit her mother in prison regularly.

Prak Sri Neth helps the new children feel right at home

We do not have enough information yet to know if these new children will be able to visit their parents. But our belief, like that of the Cambodian government, is that we support the family system so that the children can be returned to their homes in the future if possible.

These eight young children are breathing new life into RCC. Many of the children we have nurtured over the years are now teens, preparing to launch into adulthood. Two thirds of the current children are boys, so everyone is excited about welcoming many little girls. You may ask if a doctor has looked at these children. The answer is yes. Friends had the children medically evaluated and TSF Dr. Nye is also evaluating each child.

Would you like to sponsor one of these children? The cost an annual sponsorship is $1800 per year or $150 per month, and in return we will update you on the child's progress. This is a chance to follow a child for as long as you choose through pictures and communication in return for providing their financial support. Please contact Deborah Nelson at orphanage@sharingfoundation.org for more information.

Jasmine has a new friend, Eang Sreyleap

Reap What You Sow

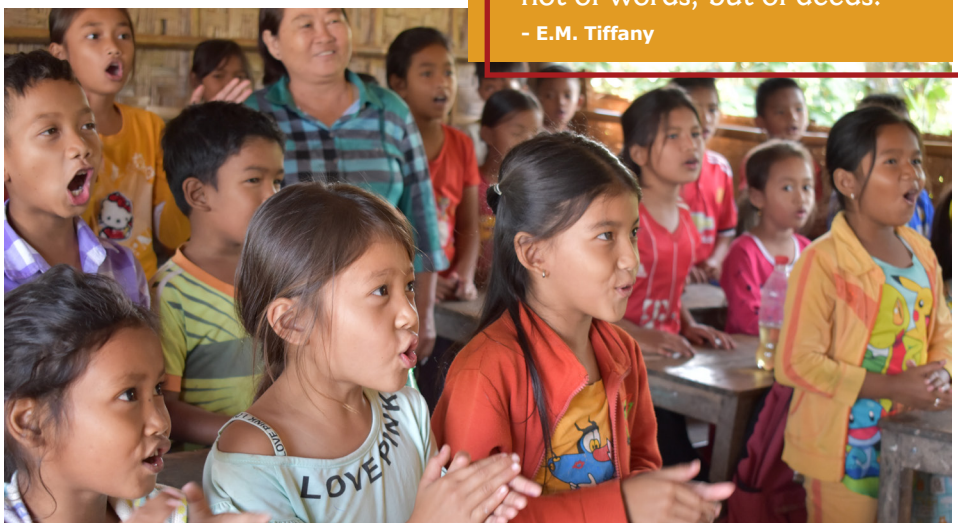
By Korey Lee

> I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words, but of deeds.
> **- E.M. Tiffany**

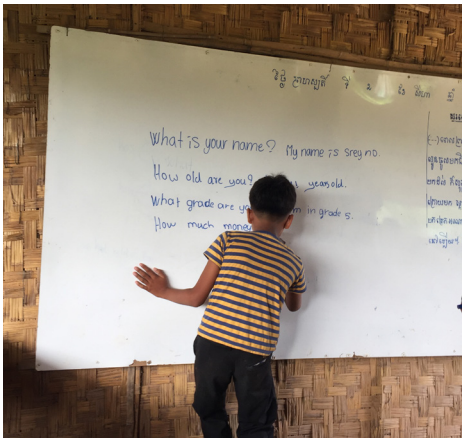
The Sharing Foundation's Farm Project is looking for support from our community. As the number of students attending our farm school grows, we are asking for help in underwriting this effort.

Currently the Farm Project supports 10–15 needy farmers working the fields; Our major requirement is that their children attend the Literacy Farm School, located adjacent to the farm fields. With 135 children attending school, it appears that we have more children than just our farmers' families. We don't mind; we want all children to have the privilege of getting an education.

The participating farmers represent the poorest of the poor. Each farmer is paid a wage for days worked in the fields and the food produced is available for their families. All excess vegetables are taken to market and sold. Funds earned from selling vegetables in the market are put into an account that is used for much needed repairs to their homes based on need. Some of the vegetables are also given to the RCC to supplement the meals there.



Our literacy school students clearly enjoy class



One young man demonstrates his English skills

We offer 15 classes a week, from Monday through Friday, Each child in our Literacy Program receives a copy book, writing utensils, and instruction from one of our two dedicated teachers.

On a personal note, I have enjoyed watching this program grow over the years. When I first visited Roteang, Kandal Province in 2006, there were half as many children attending the school as there are today. I remember vividly the children leaving the school and walking back home via a well-beaten trail. Today many of these children have bicycles, and their families come to greet them after school. It is so rewarding to know that these underprivileged families are given such a great opportunity to enrich their lives.

Would you like to support our farm project and our farm school kids? We are looking for 135 donations, one for each child at the school. An average donation of $125 will cover this much needed program. Please know that any and all donations are gratefully accepted and appreciated. Please send your contribution to the Farm Project c/o The Sharing Foundation, PO Box 600, Concord MA 01742. TSF

Meet Chanthan

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give the directions to the kids. They go to school and at night they come back and we need to check up and ask them things like–did they do their homework?!

What are your biggest challenges with our kids as they grow up and go into the world?

My biggest challenge is if they don't (want to) go to school…

What do you hope for the kids as they grow up?

I hope they will be good people in society since we try and work hard for that.

How do you try to enforce the rules with kids—we know it's difficult!

We try to reach (each of) them to teach them. To love them all.

How do you teach the kids right versus wrong?

We try to tell the older ones to do something right for their younger siblings, set an example, show them the right way.

How can we help you do your job? Is there anything TSF can do to help? *(Long pause, and then a ready laugh…)*

If some kid want to do the vocational training then we help them do that.

(Note from TSF: And of course, we will!) TSF

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!

The Sharing Foundation is looking for someone to help with advancing our profile, fundraising and development.

Please contact Ann Trudeau or Laurie Simons at *info@sharingfoundation.org* if you are interested or know someone who might be.

Thank you!

The Sharing Foundation

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This is the most welcome of sights outside one of our libraries. Thank you for helping TSF to open the doors to literacy and education for so many needy Cambodian youth!

The Sharing Foundation

P. O. Box 600, Concord, MA 01742
www.sharingfoundation.org
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The Sharing Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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