Field Trip 2019: Mondulkiri

Mondulkiri is an eastern province that borders Viet Nam, and is the most sparsely populated portion of the country. It is very beautiful and is especially known for a large the number of waterfalls. What a fun place to visit! Elephant takes our children on a field trip each year, and this year he took them to the province where he is from.

It was an exciting trip, starting with a very long drive from Roteang. The drive is normally about four hours long. However, this trip was a bit longer as the bus broke down (which underscores our need for a new one)!

Some of the kids were a little nervous they would have to spend the night in the jungle, but fortunately they were on their way in a short time, after enjoying a picnic by the side of the scenic waterfalls of BouSra.

Building Environmental Citizens

by Lee Steppacher

If you travel to Cambodia, you will depend on plastic bottles of water to provide your drinking water. You will get 2 bottles each day in your hotel room, and more in restaurants and shops. Cambodians also use these water bottles because much of their water is not safe to drink. And then what?

Plastic water bottles, as well as plastic bags, are ubiquitous on the streets of Phnom Penh, and the rural dirt lanes of Roteang. Garbage collection is a new ‘industry’ and not available everywhere. The best solution to address garbage is to burn it, but plastics in the air are harmful too. What to do?

We all know that the issue does not stop at plastics pollution. Our environment is challenged in so many ways. Climate change is just as real in Cambodia as it is in the U.S.

TSSF has launched a new initiative in response to this growing environmental concern. In order to truly support our young people to grow up to be good citizens, we want to grow their understanding of their impact on the environment, and help them to make a difference in their own communities.

At the RCC, in the English classes and at the university dormitories, we are working to increase awareness of our effect on the environment. We are starting simply, with hopes of growing our efforts over time, with help from the children themselves.

At the RCC, we have put up posters in Khmer that depict ways to recycle plastics, while Elephant plans to sponsor a clean up day at the RCC and on the streets of Roteang that the children can participate in. They can set an example for others in the village.

We have supplied posters to each of the classrooms for the English school, one in English and one in Khmer, that discuss the causes and impacts of climate change, as well as recycling. We have had conversations with Uch Sas, head of the English school, about us-

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Notes from the President
by Ann Trudeau

2019 was another busy year for The Sharing Foundation. We took in eight new children all under the age of 5 and placed four of our oldest children back with family members, which dramatically changed our children's population.

We also sent five more of our kids to vocational schools and two more to university, and we finished the Dr. Nancy House and moved the farm and school to another lot.

So what's next? This question leads to a lot of other questions! – which I hope you can help answer.

We know that just keeping our existing programs operating is a very large commitment, and no obligation is more important than the Roteang Children’s Center, the children with no family other than The Sharing Foundation. These kids are growing up so fast that we sometimes find ourselves reacting instead of anticipating the changes required of us.

We will take what we have learned over the last few years and improve programs and processes to help meet the needs of the children as they mature.

To this end, we have found some good vocational programs and are still identifying others. We can strengthen our relationship with our existing vocational partners and continue to find effective venues for vocational education. These programs all have an associated cost of about $150 per month per child that we must be prepared to pay. Can we afford to make that commitment?

We need to create a safe place for young adults to go from training to independent living. Do we need a dorm just for them located near employment or should we provide a salary to some TSF graduates that might take our kids in for a time?

Vuthea, the newly minted doctor, would like to work for the RCC on weekends, creating individual development plans for each child and doing some health training and basic mentoring of the kids. How much are we willing to pay him?

At times, we are approached to take in new children at The Children’s Center. For how long should we be willing to house them? How many children is optimal for the RCC?

The salaries for the nannies have been adjusted and we have a good hard-working staff, some of whom have been here for over 20 years. What do we do for them, if anything, when they retire?

The children are getting bigger and no longer fit onto the bus. We need a second bus. Can we go another year without one?

With advice from our medical consultant in the US, we are seriously considering the implementation of a medical records program to better track our kids’ health histories, which will need technical support. What are we willing to invest to make this happen?

Once we feel that the needs of the children at the RCC are being met, we take our focus up a level and look at our education and work programs that support the Roteang community. Fortunately they need no major changes in the coming year.

The high school and university sponsorship programs are running well, as is our English school, with only minor adjustments and improvements being made as needed. The existing English school staff is getting additional training and we are continuing to find strong candidates for new positions.

In addition, the farm and its new school building are settled into place and attendance there is as good as ever. The new venture at the farm will be fish farming. Elephant has begun this operation for very little money so it is not a board consideration but a matter of interest.

Beyond our local children and programs, some of the villages farther away that we support are requesting more help. We have been long time supporters of the government orphanage in Kampong Speu. With a population very similar to ours, we understand their needs better than most. They are not able to keep staff on the current government wages, even though they have less than half the staff we have. They are asking us for another $200 per quarter to increase salaries and maintain their nannies and other employees, who are like mothers to the children. We currently give them $300 per month. Can we afford more?

Prek Char, one of the four towns across the Mekong that we actively help, is requesting maintenance and repairs to a school building. These four villages receive uniforms, books, and have benefited from TSF libraries, playgrounds, water tanks, bathrooms and immunizations. Our maintenance director estimates the Prek Char repairs will cost about $6,000. Can we manage these additional expenses?

Ann visits the school in Mondulkiri

Finally, we have a request from Elephant to help him support the two schools he has started in the place he grew up, Mondulkiri. These schools were built by the villagers themselves with materials provided by Elephant. They are the only education being provided to some extremely poor children. He also donates clothing. The cost for all the teachers would be over $600 per month. Can we make this financial commitment?

So you can see we have difficult decisions to make. What do you think is most important? What could we do without? I would love to hear from you. atrudeau@sharingfoundation.org

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Building Environmental Citizens

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ing these posters as a basis for English lessons. This way we can educate the students on two topics at once! There is a lot of relevant curriculum on the internet that Uch Sas is also exploring.

During a recent visit to the university dorm in Phnom Penh, we had a lively discussion with the students about environmental issues and what they might do to reduce plastic use. They were sincere in their thoughts and aware of the issues facing them, Cambodia and the world. It was heartening to hear.

During our brainstorming, the students suggested one idea: using reusable water bottles instead of single use plastic bottles. There are water stations at the university where they can fill their bottles and they can prepare safe water in their dorms.

Their enthusiasm was catching, and the idea so practical, that we immediately supplied all the students with their own water bottle.

Another good idea arose from a discussion about the university students’ meal preparation. Unlike the food plans and dining halls that we know of at colleges in the U.S., TSF students live independently and are responsible for their own shopping, cooking and cleaning. Therefore, the gift of a cloth bag with the TSF logo imprinted on it could be immediately useful. When it is each student’s turn to cook for the dorm, they can use this bag instead of plastic to shop for their meats and vegetables. The students were so excited about this that they wrote to their sponsors about the new bags.

We hope this is just the beginning of a continuing conversation with our RCC children and TSF students about protecting our environment. Encouragingly, the number of Cambodian organizations taking on this challenging issue is growing and Cambodian communities are gaining awareness of the problem. Perhaps some of our students will take a special interest in these issues and become the environmental leaders for TSF. We will work to support them in any way we can.

Talking Out Loud

by Laurie Simons

Our quarterly visits to Cambodia bring many joys – conversing with the kids is a big one. When they were little, the children were understandably shy with visitors who spoke another language but now, with our burgeoning teen-aged population, that has changed. Our teenagers seek out opportunities to practice their English, whether we are playing a game with them, offering a yoga class, or celebrating at the annual birthday party. When we take photos, the banter back and forth in English is lighthearted and playful.

Uch Sas is the Director of our English Language school and he oversees the 10 teachers in Roteang and the 4 teachers in Beng Krom. He also conducts daily English lessons on the Roteang Children’s Center grounds. This past November, when board member Lee Steppacher and I visited, we had hoped to unobtrusively observe an English class. That was not to be. First of all, the kids always know where we are so when we quietly came through the back door, all eyes turned toward us. Uch Sas seized the opportunity for the kids to not only hear native speakers but also to practice their skills and think for themselves. Later, when I
Shorty after Dr. Hendrie started The Sharing Foundation, she asked the village chief how they could help the village of Roteang. He said that some of the poorest people did not have their own land to farm, making it hard to survive, so TSF leased land where villagers could farm and make a living. The one caveat to the farm workers was that their children had to attend school. TSF built The Farm Literacy school and the children came to learn.

Fast forward to 2019. New land has been recently leased that is less prone to flooding and more arable. A new school was built to serve the 135 children now attending. The funds for the new building were donated by Nancy Kuziemski in honor of her mother, Naomi. Thank you Nancy!

The new Farm School building is donated to the memory of my mother, Naomi Kuziemski, accomplished guidance counselor at Philadelphia High School for Girls. Her expertise and dedication enabled many young women, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, to go on to college education. - Nancy Kuziemskiz

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**Birthday | Wedding | Anniversary | Mother’s Day | Father’s Day | Bar Mitzvah | Teacher Gift Graduation | Memorial Donations**

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**No Gifts...Please**

It is a request hosts often make. You may have made it yourself when hosting an event. It means that your presence IS the gift. But what if you want to mark an occasion in some way that doesn’t involve making a purchase?

**In Lieu of Flowers**

It is a request families may make after the passing of a loved one. Instead of a flower arrangement, as beautiful as they are, family may ask that something more lasting and meaningful be given to honor a life.

**In Honor Of**

It is a gift to mark a special person or a special occasion in a life. Maybe it is a graduation, a retirement or another important accomplishment to be acknowledged.

In any of these cases, consider a contribution to The Sharing Foundation (TSF). A charitable contribution can make a special occasion or event even more memorable. TSF will acknowledge the donor and will notify the individual(s) of the donation made in their honor.

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All donations may be made by check or online at: [sharingfoundation.org/donate](http://sharingfoundation.org/donate).

Need ideas? [donations@sharingfoundation.org](mailto:donations@sharingfoundation.org)

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Two samples of our colorful and meaningful In Honor Of cards
Three Girls in Need of Sponsors

Six of the eight children who came to the RCC last March have been sponsored which is great news. We are still looking for sponsors for two sisters, Soreaksa, 5 years old and Sonita, who is three. Their parents are presently incarcerated and they will be indefinitely. They have adjusted well to their new home in Roteang. Both girls have a ready smile and love posing for pictures. Each morning they can be found in the preschool and on some afternoons, they go to the computer school. A full annual sponsorship is $1800 each.

Srey Den, a lovely 13 year old is need of a half sponsorship ($900 per year). This past year she was in 7th grade at Beltei, the international school many of our children attend. She happily passed the necessary test to advance to 8th grade this year and is being tutored in math and science three days a week. Srey Den enjoys English classes at both the RCC and our English language school every day. On Sunday afternoons she participates in music lessons.

If interested in doing full or half sponsorships, please contact Laurie Simons at info@sharingfoundation.org.

We thank you in advance for opening your heart to these young girls.

Field Trip 2019: Mondulkiri

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The highlight of the trip was a visit to the beautiful Bou Sra waterfall where the kids were able to frolic in the water, which they loved.

The province is inhabited by the Mondulkiri ethnic minority, which has some unique traditions and dress. Elephant encouraged the girls to embody these traditions on their visit by wearing special dresses and putting flowers in their hair. It was a bit cold for them that day (about 66 F) but they danced and had a great time!

This was a very fun and successful field trip, thanks to Elephant and other staff members. In past years, the children have travelled to Siem Riep to tour Angkor Wat, to Sihanoukville, where they first saw the ocean and to the temples at Preah Vihar. The field trips are a great way for the children to experience and learn about their country.

Talking Out Loud

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received a letter from one of the children, she referenced that visit to the classroom, which was quite touching.

Learning English gives our kids self assurance. English proficiency helps with getting a better job even if college is not possible for a given child. For instance, we had one young man get a job as a supervisor in a garment factory warehouse at double the starting salary of the average garment worker because he spoke English, and his boss prized that useful skill.

Our English Language schools continue to draw many to their doors, and TSF now serves over 700 students. Uch Sas regularly sends his teachers for professional development to make learning more effective and fun. Seeing the determination on the students’ faces as they make their way to their classroom at 5:30 or 6:30 at night after an already long day of learning assures us we are doing the right thing. We applaud their dedication and we thank you for supporting the TSF mission and our English schools. Together, we are making a difference!
Due to the recent health concerns about Covid 19, and Elephant’s recommendations, our board oversight trip scheduled for April has been canceled. We will continue to monitor the situation and hope to travel again in the fall.

In February 2020, The RCC welcomed a 4 month old baby, Ros Chanta. She is already adored by the nannies and the children. In the short time she has been with us, we have seen her weight increase and her general health improve. Welcome Ros Chanta!

Stay connected to TSF by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post weekly and include photos and updates on what is happening in the TSF world.