



Cambodia, 11 Years Later

Kanha Stockford

Participating on a trip with The Sharing Foundation allowed me to have several new experiences, plus it gave me the opportunity to reflect on all the changes in Cambodia since my trip there 11 years ago with my mom and dad. My role on this trip with Ann and my mom was to take photos during our excursions over our 5 days and capture the lives TSF is helping. Ann and my mom led the days, and I relieved them of the stress of photo-taking at the same time. As a result, we gathered hundreds of pictures that can be used for many TSF needs. It was an incredible feeling to be able to help, and doing so through something I love was just a bonus.

I noticed a few key changes in Cambodia since my last trip: the state of the infrastructure around the community of the RCC, the

buildings that are part of the orphanage, and the overall economy of the country. Eleven years ago, the route to the RCC consisted solely of homes on stilts, children and adults walking the roads wearing secondhand clothing and, my most prominent memory, a naked toddler holding the reins of a malnourished cow. On the route this time, I still saw homes on stilts, but many more looked like new cement construction, and there was always another new home being built around every corner we turned.

The RCC also had a newer look. Pulling up to the community, the front porch felt farther away than before. Perhaps the beautiful new driveway and landscaping made it seem that way, or maybe it was because I was so happy to be back there, but everything looked so



Mother and daughter fun in Cambodia

much brighter and nicer. It could not have offered a more welcoming vibe. This change in perspective put a smile on my face. Knowing that the RCC, and the country itself, are thriving gave me the great feeling that we are part of helping Cambodia grow.

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Nothing better than being surrounded by family

🎓 Moving on up!

Our RCC kids are growing up and moving on—and we couldn't be more delighted.

As our vocational students learn skills and talents, a few are already making a living on their own.

Bros Lux is a mechanic and has already started to save money every month.

Srun Sok Heng passed the National Exam and has now begun her first semester at Norton University. She has always been a dedicated student and her hard work has paid off. She has joined five other RCC students at the dorms.

Sokneath was in the 2022 graduation class. He is working at a job that an RCC alumna, Pharoth, told him about. It helps to know people! Part of the graduation ceremony involves the parents of the graduates who stand with them when presented with their diploma. It is a proud day for families. When Sokneath's name was announced, Head TSF Nanny Chanthan went to stand with him, and then all his family (RCC brothers and sisters) rushed to join him on stage; so many smiles, so much joy!

2022 In Review

After more than two years, Board members were finally able to visit Cambodia again! And we found that our children and programs have been well cared for in our absence. Recent adjustments to salaries and improved benefits for the staff have made the relationship between the US Board and Cambodian staff stronger than ever.

2022's most important accomplishment was the improvement of medical care for over 60 of our Roteang Children Center (RCC) residents. Because medical care is improving in Cambodia, we can now trust local resources for our children's care. Nearly all of our 60 children had a full medical exam at the Hope Clinic in Phnom Penh; their test results were then reviewed by our U.S.-based medical consultant, Dr. Sandra Meyerson. As a result, we are addressing medical challenges such as HIV medication, anemia, and Hep B boosters needed by many of the kids along with some other medical needs.

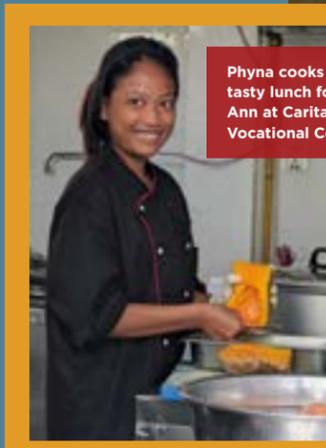
With our children growing older quickly, we are now focusing on life skills and future professions in our communication with them. Eight of our RCC kids attended university in 2022 with one graduate already working as a teacher's assistant. Eight other children are in our vocational program—learning cooking, AC repair, general construction and salon treatments. Three of our boys and two of our girls have left our direct care: one young woman is taking a year off from her university study to have a baby and another, who is HIV positive, left to live with a boyfriend; we continue to monitor and support both of them, prioritizing their health and safety. The young men who have left our care also stay under our watch for a period of time, especially if they are HIV positive. All three of them, who received vocational training, have left to find work in other areas and live independently.

The village children we support continue to show us their dedication to learning, with more than 125 applications for our High School sponsorship program and over 600 attending our two English Schools. These kids want to learn! Ten of our High School students are continuing on to the university program, likely the first in their families to attend college.

We invested in facilities improvements, including remodeling a school building in the village of Prek Char and installing a new tile-lined driveway at the RCC. We bought a used, but new-to-us, bus for the RCC. Maintenance of all the facilities and schools we support is a perennial, and ever increasing, budget item.

Our Together Again event this June in Acton, MA won this year's award for the most fun TSF activity. More than 200 people including 50 adopted Cambodians came together to celebrate The Sharing Foundation. We also wished Dr. Nancy Hendrie a very happy birthday.

It is with great pleasure that I report to you another year of successful support for the children who need it most in Cambodia.



Phyna cooks up a tasty lunch for Ann at Caritas Vocational Center



Our high school students eagerly reading letters from their sponsors

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Contact: Marge Stockford, High School Sponsorship Program, TSF: highschool@sharingfoundation.org

Introducing Uch Sas: Creating Opportunity through English

Marge Stockford

It's 6:30 pm on a weeknight, forty-five minutes southeast of Phnom Penh, and the courtyard of the Roteang School emanates quiet. Except for the occasional bark of a dog or spin of a bicycle wheel, the only sound you can hear are children's voices, from first graders to high school seniors, reading blackboard lessons or stories from books, words lofting out of the open classrooms, all in English.

One of The Sharing Foundation's greatest accomplishments in its decades long history has been teaching English to hundreds of children living in and around Roteang village through our nightly English school. In so doing, we have helped open doors for education and employment that these young people would otherwise not have access to. And a key factor in the English program's success has been its leader since 2011, Uch Sas.

Uch Sas's life is inextricably woven into both the village of Roteang and The Sharing Foundation. He has lived in Roteang village his whole life—he grew up here with his parents and one sister and one brother, and has recently purchased a home just down the street from TSF, which he shares with his wife, Dalin, head of the Help School and a TSF English teacher, and their two and a half children. (They expect a new baby later this year!)



Learning is always fun when Uch Sas is in charge

in 2011 to teach English, eventually getting promoted to lead our entire English program! It's clear to see how important sponsors are to our children, as demonstrated by the fact that these many years later, Uch Sas still remembers his high school and university sponsor, Harvey Silberstein.

“**It was a fortunate day long ago that a young boy named Uch Sas, with a keen interest in learning and a passion for English, arrived at our TSF English school to learn and ultimately become one of our leaders.**”

Uch Sas has also been connected to TSF first as a student himself and then as an English School teacher/director for more than twenty years. He recalls hearing others speak English when he was a very young child and, even then, he passionately wanted to speak the language himself. When he realized that the English lessons he was receiving at the village school weren't adequate, he convinced his parents to bring him to the TSF school. From that beginning, with the help of his TSF sponsor support for his years of high school and university, Uch Sas finished his education. He returned to TSF

For Uch Sas, English has always been about opportunity. Cambodian youth with no English skills are likely headed for physically demanding and lower-paid jobs like farming or factory work, whereas young people who learn English have a chance for a career in teaching at a private school or working in a library, hotel, restaurant or bank. TSF's program, providing education and practice in English for up to a dozen years, has launched many Roteang area youth into these career opportunities.

Ensuring the quality of English instruction

has always been essential to Uch Sas. To be sure the program is meeting rigorous standards, he observes each teacher regularly in their classrooms and meets with them twice per month for one-on-one consultations and feedback sessions. He also supports their own career advancement by sending them for weekend trainings.

And he wants to do much more. The English program was only able to accept 80 of the 420 students who took and passed the entrance exam this past December (some who traveled from 25 kilometers away) due to a teacher shortage. (There are other schools that offer English classes in the area but the TSF class quality is preferred.) Uch Sas increased class sizes to more than 30 in order to take on more students but he knows that's not optimal for student learning. The Board has authorized him to raise English teachers' salaries and is working with him to recruit additional staff.

It was a fortunate day long ago that a young boy named Uch Sas, with a keen interest in learning and a passion for English, arrived at our TSF English school to learn and ultimately become one of our leaders. We look forward to watching his commitment to the teaching of English as he continues to support and lead the education and lives of the children of Roteang and beyond.



NOTEWORTHY



Six of our graduates celebrate a milestone accomplishment

Our 13th class of university graduates were celebrated in October 2022. The ceremony began with a Blessing dance from our RCC traditional dancers and then parents of the graduates joined them on stage to receive their diplomas! Alumni, current college students, high school students, and Roteang residents all participated in the joyful occasion.

We are happy to report that all the graduates have jobs and we have our first lawyer in this class! Congratulations to all on this milestone achievement



After a three year pause, Elephant was once again able to take the kids to visit Angkor Wat. He took a group of about 50+, kids and staff, to the renowned cultural site. "Don't forget about me, Dad" was the common refrain from the college and vocational kids—no one wanted to be left out. For some, it was their first time to the temples and for others it was a return trip. It was not only an educational excursion but it appears that a good time was had by all.



Jumping for joy



Cambodia, 11 Years Later

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We were so lucky finding our hotel and accommodating spots to eat. The Anik Palace Hotel was the perfect place to stay because of their great hospitality; the staff went above and beyond. When we weren't eating there—and I could have eaten there every day!—we went to a different restaurant every night, and not one was a disappointment. I was amazed at the variety of cuisines Phnom Penh offered: Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Cambodian and many more. Although our stay wasn't long enough to try everywhere my stomach wanted, I loved our variety of meals.

I was also surprised that some places we went still required visitors to be conservatively covered. When my mom and I entered the Royal Palace, we saw signs that recommended wearing long sleeves and pants although we didn't think they were required. But at the ticket booth, I was denied entrance as I was wearing shorts that were above my knees. Unfortunately, that was our last day in Phnom Penh so we didn't have time to return. I was disappointed we couldn't go in but it also gave me a reality check: I had been so shocked at how the country had developed that I didn't realize it could grow and change but still maintain its culture. I am very happy

that Cambodian traditions have not faded despite how much the country has advanced.

When I was not taking photos of the high-spirited children of The Sharing Foundation, or playing games in the back of the RCC, you could find me at the Russian Market. But if I wasn't there, you probably just missed me—I was on a tuk-tuk headed for the Central Market. Being at the markets reminded me of our earlier trip, and that is an experience that hadn't really changed. It was as hectic and fun as ever. We were very

blessed to have Chita accompany us during our activities most days. I was even more thankful she came to the markets with us one day. I don't recall bargaining much 11 years ago, but if you saw me this time, I was following and learning from Chita. I loved watching her negotiate a price down and I put that into action for my own shopping as well.

I loved seeing things in Cambodia in a new light on this trip—I couldn't be more appreciative that I had this chance. [TSF](#)



What I'll remember most

Board In-Country Trip Report, February 2023

Marge Stockford & Ann Trudeau

Three or four times a year, one or two members of The Sharing Foundation Board of Directors travels to Cambodia to visit the people we support and check in on our projects. This February, Marge Stockford and her daughter Kanha made the trip, along with President Ann Trudeau.

Every trip's highlight is visiting the Roteang Children's Center (RCC) and this time was especially fun since we threw our first ever Valentine's Day party. Children from the Carlisle Middle School had created Valentines, which were distributed to a bunch of very enthusiastic children. The kids, in turn, made Valentines of their own while Marge and staff filled more than 200 water balloons and led the whole community in some wholesome competition on the RCC's backyard soccer field. A few people got wet!

With so many teenagers under our care, we have begun focusing on life skills. Marge and Kanha interviewed most of the teenaged girls while Ann had a teen talk with the boys. The Cambodian culture has a different approach to educating adolescents about their lives and bodies than we see in the U.S. As a result, we are careful not to impose our own culture on our RCC kids while still ensuring the teens get the information they need to be safe.

We also traveled to our university students' dorms, now divided between girls and boys. The students were enthusiastic and energetic, although some of the first years were a bit homesick having never left their village or families before. We were thrilled to visit with the six RCC children now living at the dorms and attending university as they prepared for a new semester.



Valentine's Day at the RCC

Not all our kids can make it to college. We connected with seven of them who are living under the care of a vocational school, learning the restaurant business, AC repair, motor repair and/or salon treatments. We were pleased to see how confident and happy they seemed.

Our farm is looking good with more than 135 small children attending the Naomi farm school and the local farmers growing kale and catfish. After our farm visit, we headed to the sewing center to pick up piles of crafts, which we loaded into our luggage and brought back to the US for sales to support TSF's many programs. We also saw the uniforms our seamstresses had sewn for our trip to the villages we support across the Mekong river.

We brought about 400 of those uniforms with us to Ben Krom where we were warmly welcomed with cheers and songs by their

600+ students. Three other village schools nearby also received uniforms and we visited the libraries we support in those three communities. This trip also gave us an opportunity to find and purchase more books for all of our libraries. In addition, we checked out the renovated building at the Prek Char village school, which was funded by the generosity of the Peckar and Barney families.



Our recently replenished library is a popular spot before and after school

One of the best parts of our trips is the time we get to spend with our staff. Hearing what they have to say is critical to keeping our projects running effectively. We have recently hired Elephant's daughter, Leng Chita, part-time; she has already made significant contributions by assisting our children in accessing quality, documented medical care that we are now requiring. She has been an outstanding addition to the TSF team.

We so appreciated having Kanha join us as she served as our official photographer and played a key role in connecting with our kids—she did an excellent job at both! (An important note: since Kanha isn't a Board member, TSF did not pay for any of her travel or expenses.) We look forward to the time her generation will take the TSF mission forward in serving the educational needs of the children of Cambodia. [TSF](#)



Kanha hands out uniforms in Ben Krom



The Sharing Foundation

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