



# SINGING KITES



## DECEMBER 2020 UPDATE

### *Dear Friends of Singing Kites*

Again, always our first thoughts when starting our newsletter to you, is to say again how deeply grateful we are for the continuing support we receive, particularly through these most difficult times during the pandemic.

It has been a very challenging year for us at Singing Kites and we have had to make some changes to our project to ensure the most important parts of our work could continue through the almost near impossible challenges Covid 19 has presented to us.

In many ways the virus has given us reason to pause and rethinking what best we can offer our children. To review our achievements over the last 11 years, and make decisions about where we head from here. We do this with one thought in mind, to bring beneficial offerings, and something of worth to our children in this “new age” we are all part of now.

I will talk about these changes separately.

We owe our deep gratitude to many people for this opportunity to be able to continue sharing the road with our rural, village communities.

Because of the Pandemic nobody has been able to visit TCEC since December last year. But this is where the strengths of our wonderful teachers show, in the decisions they make every day to continue with the work we started!

In the end this is the greatest achievement to come out of these times, for us.

### TEACHING IN CHALLENGING TIMES

When the outbreak of Covid 19 first emerged in Cambodia on the 27th of January 2020, outbreaks were significantly greater in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville than in the rural areas. The Government wasted no time in closing all businesses and schools.

As our area at the time was Covid free, Tith was at first reluctant to take action and deprive the children of education, when the factories and market places still remained open and Covid didn't seem to be a problem in rural areas.

The Government education officials visited our school in March and asked us to close, but gave us permission to offer our students a “home school” situation! We were given permission for the teachers to go out into our student's villages and set up classroom situations in village homes there. This they did!



At the beginning of May, when the first wave of Covid 19 in Cambodia abated, we were given permission by the Government to open the school again, but to small classes of no more than 20 students.



We talked to the students about the importance of washing hands before coming into the classroom, and maintaining social distancing.



But a further wave of the virus came in June and we had to close the school once again. This time it was not recommended going out into the villages.

The teachers kept busy tilling the soil, growing some vegetable crops for the elderly and needy village members, and caught up on maintenance jobs in the school.



In October it seemed things were returning to some normality and we were given permission to open the school once again. Which we did cautiously, but with strict Covid safe health practices in place

We held a parent meeting and discussed with the family members who came, the situation that we were all confronted with.



Together we decided that we would only slowly re-implement parts of the program that had been cancelled when the outbreak first occurred, as the future still looked uncertain enough not to return to life as it had been for us before Covid.

This pause included two parts of the program put on hold temporarily. The Dental Program, for obvious Covid health issues; and the “school bus” bringing children in from the far reaching villages. We just didn’t want to start this up, something that would take a lot of organizing to start up again, to have to close it again at a minutes notice. It is always difficult getting the messages to and from these outlying village communities.

Three weeks ago a third wave of Covid 19 broke out again and the Government asked all schools, and businesses to close for two weeks.

Unfortunately in this latest wave, the virus has spread to some rural villages which has been a great concern to many of our village families.

At the time of writing this update, our school has closed once again, but we are expecting a Government clearance announcement allowing us to open once again in a few days time. Teachers are preparing for this renewed opening.

The latest review today (the 20th December), is that Cambodia has had two weeks of no new cases and the staff are excitedly preparing to once again open the doors of our school.

Life has changed for us somewhat, but we are still doing our very best to answer requests from the parents in our community.

They continue to tell us, that they wish for accessible, quality education for their children. They know so well that this alone provides a pathway out of poverty so that they can make well-informed decisions to secure a better future for themselves and their families.

We want to continue to help provide these opportunities for our rural, village communities because in all this, it is the rural students who continue to be forgotten.

## SNIPPETS OF NEWS

Our [University students](#) have had a very disrupted year to say the least. Online learning in spasmodic bursts has all that has been available to them.

However, luckily all the disruption occurred at the end of their courses, but just before our students took their final exams. They all passed and have graduated now and in between all the lockdowns. They are in the throws of applying for jobs.

[Raksmei Mark](#) applied for a job with the Pasteur Institute of Cambodia before he graduated even, and was fortunate to be awarded a laboratory technician position there. He was just one of two applicants to be accepted.

This job with them, he hopes, will be a future pathway for him to do his Masters and maybe move on to a PhD in Bio Engineering at a later date; perhaps in a country outside of Cambodia, as there is no Masters Degree for Bio Engineering there.

Our two students Raksmei and Darya Piset were in the first intake of students in this brand new course.

We are so proud of Raksmei as he has been taking a very active role in testing during the Pandemic, and has had the responsibility of processing 700 community tests each day.

(Raksmei is in the centre!)



From village boy.....to a front line worker!

There have been many other success stories for us to relate, but students such as Raksmei are the reason we are so eternally grateful for the generosity of donors who have supported our university students through their years of study

They are most grateful for this support, and for the brighter future it has given them.



Soccer at TCEC is back on again! The children gather endlessly on our basic football field, and their serious involvement and enjoyment together is so obvious.



Our breakfast program was started again last month. For so many of our littlest ones, this is their only meal until parents return home from work late at night. We notice a difference in the children when we have breakfast at school for them.



In June and through to the end of August we had a lot of very heavy rain storms in the afternoons which caused some flooding at the school. But it was nothing the teacher's couldn't handle!



### Lastly, the very best news to finish off with!

It is with the greatest of pleasure we share with you, the wonderful news of the wedding between our amazing Preschool Director [Channa Tek](#) and her fiancée [Sovannarith Saing](#).

Channa and Saing will marry at her home in Tanop Village on the 27th of December 2020, where they will live after their marriage.

We wish them every good wish imagineable!

May they be blessed with health, happiness and a long life spent together.



## IN CONCLUSION

I know we say the same thing every year at this time, but as the year draws to a close, what is absolutely foremost in our minds, is the deep gratitude we feel to all those who make the difference in us being able to continue what we started almost 11 years ago.

People's contributions support our staff wages. We have continued through the Pandemic to make sure our teachers were paid as non of our teachers would be replaceble if we lost them. We have supported these village people through their respective university degrees. They have received so much in PD work from Carolyn Watts and have become not only amazing teachers, but incredible nurturers and mentors for our children. In our teachers they see people from their own communities who have reached for the stars, accessed education, and now have special and rewarding jobs as a result.

Our breakfast program, has just begun again. We are grateful for the financial support given for this.

Again, this Christmas 2020, I repeat my gratitude with great sincerity. There are too many to thank individually. Those who have funded every aspect of our ability to continue to help those in need of our help.

Importantly I too must add my personal gratitude, for the help and support to me personally of Bharat Vanmali, Alex Hotchin, June Moro, Carolyn Watts, and other team members. This support gives me the will to continue to do everything I can, to keep our wheels of change turning in these difficult times. I feel truly and deeply grateful.

All of our [Singing Kites team](#) wish you and your families a memorable, happy and very safe Christmas.

Warmest regards from us all.

