



Newsletter

Clean water, a human right not a luxury

WFC Newsletter Issue 21

November 2023

Cambodia's post COVID recovery is accompanied by some exciting changes for both the Siem Reap area, the tourist industry and *Water for Cambodia*.

Water for Cambodia has benefitted from the traditionally strong tourism market sparked by the remarkable UNESCO heritage existing in and around Siem Reap. Tourism has helped expose the outside world to the dramatic lack of basics like clean water, reliable health care, adequate nourishment and basic hygiene. **Water for Cambodia's** simple, direct and principled approach to providing effective long-lasting solutions has converted many from tourists to supporters. Past newsletters have featured several examples. Though many supporters remain active, the past three years have been very challenging due to the near total absence of international travelers there.

The relaxation of COVID restrictions in mid 2022 and the resulting surge of pent-up desire to travel capped by the opening of Cambodia's newest and largest airport serving Siem Reap has resulted in a very encouraging recovery in visits during 2023. With the prime season, December thru April, approaching the team is looking forward to hosting visitors and volunteers both old and new again.



During the COVID hiatus both Siem Reap city and Water for Cambodia used the time to make site and capacity improvements. The city focused on roadway, drainage and river improvements. **Water for Cambodia** expanded the lab testing capability, created appropriate space to host client, supporter and student

meeting and training sessions and expanded the outdoor work area and parking access.

Introducing HENG Rithy Sakk recently promoted to be the ***Rikreay**** testing laboratory manager.



Rithy is 28, married with no children yet and resides in Siem Reap. He has been a member of the ***Water for Cambodia*** team since 2019. Rithy graduated from Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana with a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry. He is fluent in both English and his native Khmer. His western cultural experience makes him a natural for working with customers and donors alike.

In his new position he brings a high level of laboratory skills and professionalism to the job. He is responsible for managing the

Water Lab and the Facebook presence of both ***Water for Cambodia*** and ***Rikreay Laboratory***. Rithy also coordinates with all other clients and organizations to ensure that the ***Rikreay Laboratory's*** water testing services are accessible to everyone with a need.

Rithy Sakk is a valuable asset to the in-country team and has played a pivotal part in successfully expanding the lab's services to include pesticide testing in support of the local mango farmers. He is dedicated to his work and is always willing to go the extra mile to help others. He is a team player who is always willing to share his knowledge and expertise with others.

**Rikreay Laboratory is the official name of the laboratory registered with the Cambodian tax authorities. Because the lab sells services locally it is required to register.*

***Water for Cambodia* is recognized in a feature article in the August 23rd edition of KHMER TIMES**

In an article entitled Cambodia – A Kingdom of Contrasts ***Water for Cambodia*** is highlighted by contrasting rural life with the emerging cosmopolitan glamor of Phnom Penh. Quoting directly, the author observes: “Cambodia and its people offer the world a rare insight into a land and culture that spans two worlds. The rural provinces with their subsistence farmers contrast starkly with the glittering



glamour of the capital city, Phnom Penh. Having experienced both extremes in the last four days, Cambodia once again has proven it is indeed the Kingdom of Wonder from the most remote village to the bustling metropolis.”

The author, Susanne Walters, visited the village of Rom Chek in Banteay Srey district with ***Water for Cambodia*** team members and spoke with villagers who were seeking to have latrines installed at their homes. An example of the sure interest that grows from the children’s exposure to latrines at school. She emphasized the critical nature of sanitation and clean water to community health and recognized that these basics literally save lives.

Though ***Water for Cambodia*** has a significant presence in the Banteay Srey district the challenge to bring clean water (2375 filters) and improved sanitation continues. Beginning with a pilot/learning project in 2017 the in-country team has facilitated community efforts to install several hundred household latrines across several districts in the Siem Reap Province. The rate of installations has grown

each year as funding to support this most basic need has become more available.

Water for Cambodia has long recognized that bringing clean safe water and introducing improved hygiene and sanitation habits is a form of basic culture modification. Practice has demonstrated the benefits of sending the message home with children exposed to them at school. Some of the first 50 filters installed in 2006 were in village schools where very quickly the kids began bringing filtered water home from school. The demands for bio-sand filters at home followed quickly. Once the team under the leadership of Samley mastered the building of latrines they took on the challenge of serving village schools. History began to repeat! Village leaders and teachers began requesting latrines at their schools. Today there are dozens of schools with dual (boys and girls) latrines with integrated hand washing stations and nearly every project includes provisions for another school.



population. It seems to meet with the satisfaction of a group of very enthusiastic beneficiaries.

The newest example of a full function co-ed latrine serving, coincidentally, the Rom Chek village secondary school. This facility was built with a grant from Ocean State Job Lot and is tailored to the needs of a larger school

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