



Newsletter

Clean water, a human right not a luxury

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Twenty years ago **Water for Cambodia** became a pragmatic reality. Both local and US based personnel engaged together to launch a physical presence and build, deliver and install the first 30 bio-sand filters to local households and schools. **WFC** has since grown into a domestic and internationally recognized leader in providing and assuring clean safe water.

Gunther Hausen's passion to find a practical way for his Rotary club to create a program to positively impact the lives of others resulted in what is today **Water for Cambodia**. He combined the time proven technology of a slow sand filter, the support of his and other local Rotary Clubs and contacts at the Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) in Siem Reap Cambodia into a real-world solution. Having identified a suitable household size filter design, Gunther began building a network of supporters. Families, Rotary clubs and individual donors partnered with the leadership at AHC to bring **WFC's** predecessor **Health Pure Water and Literacy (HPWL)** to life.



In February 2006 the first 30 filters were built with the generous support of HAGAR an experienced humanitarian NGO based and operating in Cambodia. Our local team lead by Mieko Morgan and Sakhem NHEAN installed the filters at several homes and two schools in the villages of Lbeuk and Thnot Chrum, Don Keo Commune a few kilometers from Siem Reap. The very first home installation shown left was revisited in 2020 and was still in daily use by the very satisfied family. This was the first of nearly 35,000 filters installed since that day 20 years ago.

A fundamental goal of this bold and exciting initiative was to effect lasting change in the health and future of the families being served, starting with the most vulnerable children. School installations received priority in each new commune as the reach of **Health Pure Water and Literacy** grew. Each student learned about the importance of how clean disease-free water helped them stay healthy. Each child was encouraged to bring home water from school. This approach turned into an amazingly successful “marketing tool”.



Children ‘supervising’ an exciting addition to their school yard



Effective education and securing the trust and active support from commune and village leaders was recognized as elemental to gaining acceptance for this unconventional source of water for drinking, cooking and personal sanitation. The late Sakhem NHEAN, former “jungle fighter” and respected leader in the Siem Reap community is shown with the local commune chief (left) conducting a training session for families receiving a bio-sand filter.

A picture is often worth as much as many thousand words spoken. Better yet, seeing the results can do more to convince the community of the efficacy of the filter than lecture, training or endorsements. This real world demonstration of before (unfiltered) contrasted with direct immediate output (filtered) water gets attention every time. Though the contrast is stunning the reduction of harmful bacteria, paracites and particulates is more important.



To make this launch official, an office, staff and plan of action was developed with the indispensable help of Mieko Morgan (Mieko hidden within the helmet and behind the big front wheel). Mieko was responsible for all nursing supervision and training at ACH as well as part of the **HPWL** pilot staff. Her grasp of the local village health needs as well as the practical knowledge of the rural culture proved fundamental to how **HPWL's** operational practices would develop.



The next key task was to begin to build and train a permanent staff. The first fulltime employee and the one destined to become the first field leader. Satchia HENG joined the team in February 2006. Satchia was a graduate of a local college with strong relevant experience working for a local non-profit as a skills development trainer. His organizational and language skills were a bonus as Khmer and English were key to communications

across the international enterprise. His first assignment was to learn the basics... build and install filters in the field. During the remainder of 2006 an office was set up in a garage at hospital. The first filter molds and tools were purchased, a second employee and first motorcycle were added. After several method development trials (durable concrete construction is a bit of an art) an additional 20 filters were built and installed in the original villages.



Sathia and Sakhem working on perfecting their skills

Marking **WFC's** 20th year is the celebration of individual dedication, uncommon support from around the world, the faculties of two generous universities, AHC leadership, dedicated local leaders as well as an extraordinary in-country team each of whom have made their lasting imprint. This has been facilitated by a very committed US Board of Directors who have contributed resources and thousands of hours raising funds and providing training, support, advice and cheerleading. **Only made possible by the many donors large and small from every corner of the world.**

February's profile introduces the longest serving member of the ***Water for Cambodia*** staff, CHEE Sophoan.

Sophoan joined Water for Cambodia in July 2007 having previously worked as a waiter in Siem Reap. As the organization's second full-time employee, Sophoan played a major role in building and installing the first 1000 filters, **WFC's** initial production lot in 2007, marking a major milestone defining the early operations.



Over the years, he has become highly skilled in bio-sand filter installation and quality control, ensuring families receive safe and reliable access to clean water. Today, Sophoan works closely with our WASH Coordinator, Samley, strengthening technical standards as well as supporting community engagement. His dedication and long service embody the spirit of ***Water for Cambodia***—combining practical expertise with a deep commitment to improving lives.

February 2026 marks a milestone in the history of ***Water for Cambodia*** and recognizes what a small and dedicated group can achieve when they believe in their purpose. This is demonstrated by three groups that made this all happen:

- The talented, dedicated team and leadership on the ground in Cambodia
- The US Board of Directors that developed and oversee the program
- The hundreds of individuals, organizations and businesses that fund it

THANK YOU ALL

Visit us at: www.waterforcambodia.org or contribute directly at

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