

# Lions 4 Kids Cambodia

Est. 2024

## Lions Club of Logan Village Inc.

March 2025

The Lions Club of Logan Village presently sponsor two schools in the Siem Reap Province

Kokbeng Village Volunteer Teacher School is located approximately 15 klm north east of Siem Reap city (north of Angkor Wat).

Thnal Village Volunteer Teacher School is located approximately 25klm south east of Siem Reap city (south of Angkor Wat).

As the name suggests, both schools are owned and run by volunteers, who provide this service to their local communities. Education is not free in Cambodia, so many poor families are not able to afford to send their children to school. So many children receive no formal education at all.

Our schools provide an opportunity for local children to receive some formal education, learning to speak, read and write the English language. This gives these kids an opportunity to gain future employment and perhaps progress to further higher education.

Without schools like ours, these children would likely receive no formal education and be destined to continue to live in poverty.

### **Background to our project:**

In 2023 Lion Pedro and I were in Siem Reap on vacation, where we met and befriended a local Tuk Tuk driver Khim Sokheng. He told us about a volunteer school out in the small village that he supports (Kokbeng Village Volunteer Teacher School). He told us the school taught English to the poor kids and orphans in the village.

We were intrigued, and upon our return, Lion Pedro sent over some money. Khim bought a heap of school supplies, and the reaction from the teacher and students was incredible. We were both amazed what a small financial injection could do.

Hence, Lions 4 Kids Cambodia project was born, when, in January 2024 a motion was passed at a Logan Village Lions Club to formally commence our project.

We commenced fundraising (mainly through social media) and in just over 4 months we were able to raise \$11500 AUD from 39 separate donors \*(businesses and individuals).

### **Why Cambodia?:**

Cambodia is an extremely poor nation. A young nation, that has only really known peace for just over 25 years, after being at war for well over 30 years.

The Khmer Empire was established in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century.

During the Vietnam war Cambodia was heavily bombed by the USA due to the Vietnamese using Cambodia to move from North to South (Ho Chi Min trail). The eastern side of Cambodia was subject to carpet bombing by USA. Many 100,000's of tonnes of bombs dropped (one estimation I located was that 25,000 bombs were dropped on one 25 square kilometre area).

Due to the unrest caused by the war in neighboring Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge (Pol Pot) took power in 1975. Estimations are that in the next 4 years, 1.9 million Cambodians died as a result of Khmer Rouge genocidal policies. It is estimated about 24% of Cambodia's 1975 population were killed.

Vietnamese took power 1979, overthrowing the Khmer Rouge. Civil war followed and raged until 1994. Unrest continued until 2004 as members of Khmer Rouge were still in power.

During the civil war millions of land mines were laid, to add to the millions of unexploded ordinances from the American bombing. Its estimated Cambodia will never be free of land mines and every week people still die or are maimed.

Cambodia is most famous for Angkor Wat, which is a Hindu-Buddhist temple considered the largest religious structure in the world . It was originally constructed in 1150.

### **Our first visit : Lions 4 Kids Cambodia: Siem Reap 2024:**

So Lions Phil and Pedro arrived in June 2024 (where we met up with a friend of Lions, Trevor), not sure what to expect or how we would proceed.

All we knew was Khim had about 3 to 4 schools that we may be able to help. We had a pocket full of cash and expected that our project would simply be supplying these schools with school supplies. How wrong we were.

### **Kokbeng Village Volunteer Teacher English School:**

Our first focus was Kokbeng Village Volunteer Teacher English School, which was the catalyst for the Lions 4 Kids Cambodia project.

Upon arrival, we were quite shocked. The school was merely an open area under roof, attached to the house of teacher Miss Reach (akin to a car port here at home) It had an old dilapidated delaminated white board on an easel stand, had holes in the roof (rain would come in when it rained), one old ceiling fan and old desks. It was hot and uncomfortable. The floor was dirt. They had no lighting. No equipment. We couldn't believe how bad it was. But they were making do with what they had.

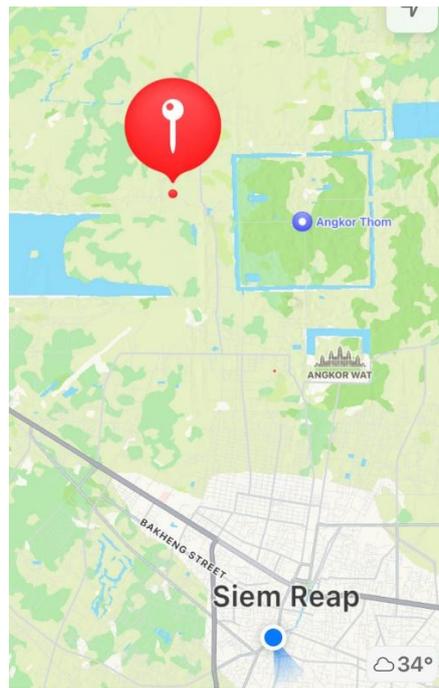
We soon found out the school didn't even have a flush toilet, and the 80 to 90 students all had to use Miss Reach's squat toilet in her house. They had little or no equipment and resources.



First impressions



Check out the holes in the roof



Location of Kok Beng Village

So, we set about formulating a plan and doing up a shopping list and we began in earnest. What we quickly discovered is that Cambodians are very resourceful, clever and hardworking. They simply lack the cash to put things into motion.

We soon located a “builder”, who we nicknamed “Bing” (as his phone was going off every 20 seconds (bing, bing, bing)), and we soon signed our first building contract (written in Khmer) and we handed over a \$200 deposit, on a \$700 build.





The build and the result. Great job

We then set about making lots of visits to different shops to buy paint, wood, roofing iron, water tanks. The list went on.

Along with Khim, our faithful interpreter, we were able to negotiate some good deals and get everything we needed for the project. We very quickly learnt there is a Khmer price and a foreigner price, and the locals were extremely generous when they realised we were helping local kids.



Had to account for every dollar spent

Roofing iron was sourced and purchased and over a number of days a new roof was installed. Then the roof was strengthened and fortified with the timber we purchased, to ensure it was now safe for the kids, and fully weatherproof.



Before



After some fresh iron installed

We then got physical and set about painting the wall and furniture in Lions colours, blue and gold. This was well received and instantly gave the whole area a huge face lift.





The classroom was extremely hot. Upon our arrival it had one ceiling fan, that barely worked. We set about sourcing what we need, and our hosts soon sourced some local “electricians”, and we installed 3 ceiling fans, 3 LED Fluro Lights and 2 wall mount pedestal fans. We also had power boards and lights and fans inside Miss Reach’s house (her workspace/office/prep area).

We then took Miss Reach, shopping and purchased a desk, storage cabinet, lap top, laminator and printer, and purchased an internet dongle and data plan, so she had some internet to assist her in prepping lesson. We also purchased a new ‘glass’ whiteboard to replace the delaminated board she had been using.



We were able to source a local stationery supply shop in town and successfully negotiated a local “khmer discount price”, and Miss Reach was given free reign to grab enough school supplies to keep the school going for the next 12 months. We soon filled up a tuk tuk full of supplies.



Early on in the piece, Lion Pedro came up with an idea to outfit the school with a uniform, to give the kids and the village a sense of pride and belonging. A clothing print shop was soon sourced and two weeks later we took possession of 150 polo shirts.

It was a special moment when they were delivered and handed out, and already Miss Reach has received feedback from the parents of students that they now look forward to going to school, wearing their uniform and have a sense of being part of something special.



Of course, we ran out time (as we only had 3 weeks), but arrangements were made and money left for a shade cloth wall to be installed, and for a new concrete floor to be installed in the next couple of weeks, to get the kids out of the dirt.

We also managed to have a sign made up which will be proudly displayed at the front of the school.



After we left Cambodia, through our ongoing financial assistance, Khim was able to keep the work going, and as promised, a concrete floor was installed at Kokbeng Village, so that the children were no longer in dust or mud, depending on the weather.





### **Kokbeng Primary School:**

We also visited nearby Kokbeng Primary School, the local government school. Some of our Lions school students also attend there, as English is not part of the curriculum.

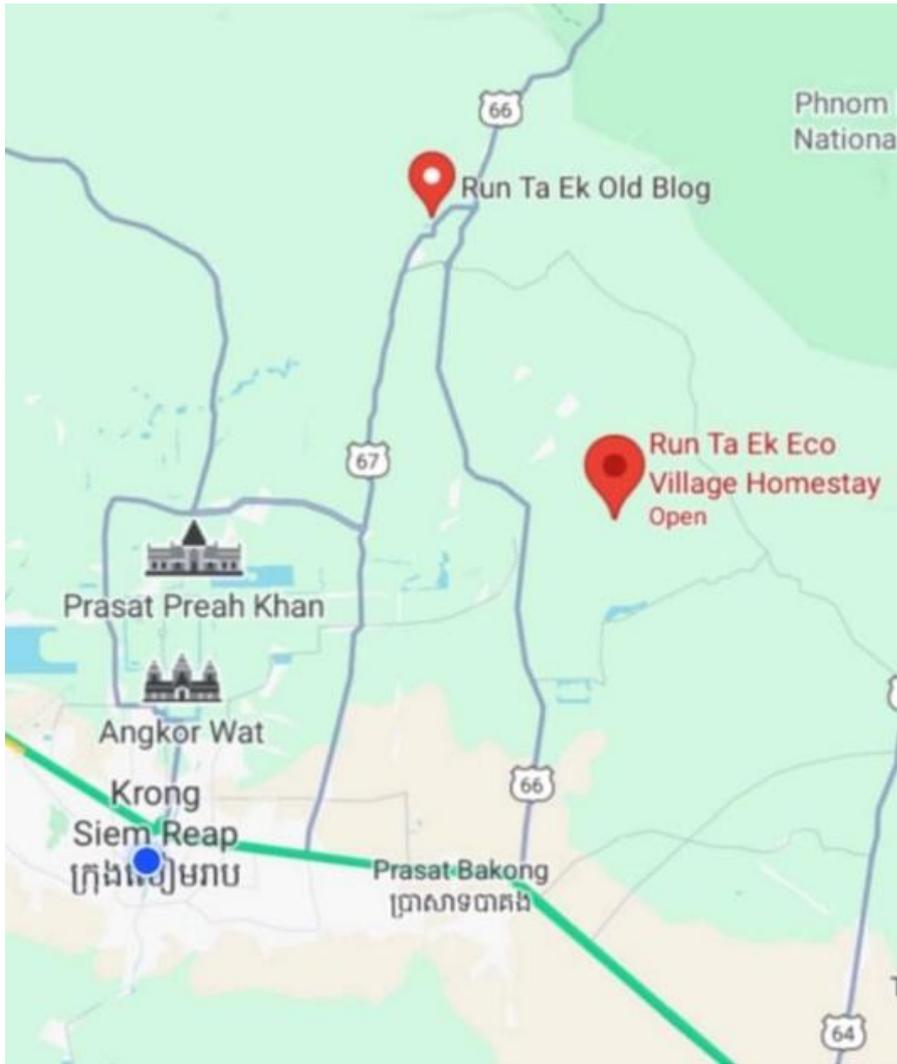
As with our state schools, they lack some funding, so we set about assisting them where we could, buying the school a new printer and buying a mountain of storey books for their library.



### **Run Ta Ek Volunteer Teacher School:**

Our host Khim took us out to a new settlement called Run Ta Ek, south of Angkor Wat. Over the last few years, up to 30,000 local people have been relocated by the government from around Angkor Wat to this new community.

It was quite surreal to see this massive development out in the middle of the jungle. Thousands of acres of jungle cleared, massive concrete roads and thousands of housing blocks (30m x 50 m) which were given to the relocated “refugees”, and they are then left to their own devices to build what shelter they can.



We were introduced to an old friend of Khims', Mr Sovann, who has worked tirelessly to build a one classroom school on his block at Run Ta Ek. We were quite impressed with what

he had achieved so far, but he needed some assistance to keep the development going. Whilst not an official “Lions School”, we were still able to assist with some school supplies.



We then set about over the next few days to get some supplies purchased and delivered to the school, so that Mr Sovann could develop a second classroom.

We also worked out a plan to build a “land bridge” from the classroom to the toilet block and to the roadway. Being wet season, the block soon becomes waterlogged, and the kids had to wade through slippery mud and water just to get to the classroom, or from the classroom to the toilet.

The ‘land bridge’ project was soon completed after we left Cambodia by our local Controller, Lion Khim.





## **Thnal Village Volunteer Teacher English School**

In the weeks after we left Cambodia, through his contacts, Khim identified this school as needing some assistance, and on his advice, we took this school on as our second sponsored Lions school.



Khim was able to quickly assist them, now that we had the “blue print” in place, and utilising our suppliers, he was able to purchase for them the required school supplies, white board and lighting, and assisted them in sprucing the place up with some railings and painting.



Using our established supplier, school uniforms were soon sourced and delivered to the students.



Over the last 3 weeks ( February 2025), a major build has commenced at Thnal Village School.

The existing classroom was an open air, carport style classroom, which was adversely affected by different weather conditions.

We hatched a plan to build two classrooms, and office and a new toilet block.

Lion Khim was able to source some local builders and work soon commenced.

It was amazing to watch the build take place and soon we had a fully fledged school rise out of the ground. Amazing – have a look at some photos of the build.







### **Lion Khim & Lions Tuk Tuk**

While still in Cambodia, our Club met in Logan Village and our Cambodian Controller, Khim Sokheng was admitted as an Affiliate member to our club.

We also set about rebranding his Tuk Tuk in Lions Colours, reupholstering his seats and roof in Lions blue and yellow; and stickers branding it “Lions Club of Logan Village Tuk Tuk”, complete with a sign on the rear, promoting Kokbeng Village Volunteer Teacher English School.

Khim will use his tuk tuk to not only make a living, but so he can continue his great community work, raising awareness of Lions International and our Lions School and will

take tourists out there. Just amazing publicity for our small club and for our ongoing project.



We even got Lions Khim business cards



Background of Lion Khim Sokheng (in his own words)

*My name is Khim SoKheng, I live in Cambodia, I am Cambodian, I was born on April 21, 1983, male, I have spent most of my childhood's life through the Civil War in the country. I am married I have three children 2 boys 1 girl. Currently I live in Siem Reap province, Veal village, Kork Chak commune, Siem Reap city, Siem Reap province. I have three siblings. Three boys and a girl, I am the third child of our family, we are farmers, we live in the countryside, 35 km from the city of Siem Reap. My parents are dead. He died when I was eight years old, he died of malaria, and my mother died when I was 17 years old, she died of liver cancer. I finish my study from Eleventh grade. Khmer language school only, because of the poor living conditions in our family did not motivate me to finish my university education. After I did not finish my university studies, I also learned some English, which made me speak English, write and read. Now I have the will and discipline to open an English language school. Volunteer in the community to help teach poor students, many of whom come from poor families. Their families could not afford to help them go to private schools, where they had to pay for tuition every month. My personal time involved in building the human resources available in the community to acquire knowledge of the English language so that they become potential resources for nation building, I aim to help the children in the village get an education Quality English through the English study of the volunteer teachers here. My hopes and aspirations for the future Hope for the cooperation of local and international philanthropists to see and participate in our community development project to help promote the continuation and empowerment of volunteer teachers. All of us who are sacrificing this precious time to be motivated to continue working. Finally, I would like to Thank you all for reading and viewing my resume.*

### **Bank Account:**

Before departing Cambodia, Lion Phil took Khim (our project Controller) and Miss Reach (our project Director) to the bank, where we opened a bank account, depositing \$1200USD so progress can continue on our project. We can now send money over to Cambodia direct to our bank account. Safety measures have been put in place and like our Lions Club, each withdrawal requires two signatories (two of the 3 signatories - Lions Khim, Miss Reach and Lion Phil).



Exciting day at the bank in Siem Reap

### **Proposed Future Stage - Lions 4 Kids Cambodia**

We have identified another new community at Peak Sneng Village, to the northeast of Angkor Wat, which like Run Ta Ek, is a new community being developed for relocated refugees.

The community will be in need of a Volunteer Teacher English School, and Lion Khim has volunteered his block of land to be used to build a new school.

Early cost estimations are \$20,000 USD (\$30,000 AUD).

We have a rough plan and intend on building a 5-room building (3 classrooms) and a toilet block. These plans will be progressed through an Engineer as required.

However, at this stage, this phase is on hold, as the acquisition of the land has not progressed. There are internal political issues at play, so now, Peak Sneng development is a watching brief. Stay tuned.

In the interim, we will continue to develop both Kokbeng Village (proposed play area and second classroom) and Thnal Village as required.

We will continue to support both schools by keeping up with school supplies, uniforms, teachers aids and meeting ongoing costs such as electricity.

**Financial Support:**

As our project has developed, we have reached out to Lions Clubs across the country.

I am pleased to announce that at this point in time, we have received financial support from 37 Lions Clubs from every state of Australia. It has been truly humbling and is typical of the Lions spirit.

We have also received tremendous financial support from the Cambodian Community in Canley Vale Sydney.

**Next Step:**

Lions Pedro and Phil will again visit Siem Reap in May 2025. We arrive in town on 20 May and will stay for 3 weeks. We are in the process of planning our work there, but no doubt will involve some painting and building.

Any Lions and other volunteers are most welcome to come and visit and chip in with some physical assistance if you wish. Or simply come over and have a look at our work and experience the rich and friendly culture.

Any queries or further information required, please email Lion Phil at [loganvillage.lions@gmail.com](mailto:loganvillage.lions@gmail.com)