



Winter 2019 Newsletter

*News from Trailblazer Foundation—
A solid footing to start 2019...*



Chris Coats with Cambodia staff on her annual visit.

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Developing Ripples of Sustainability through Community Water Projects

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A Note From Trailblazer's Executive Director

Hello Investors of Trailblazer,

I spent the past two letters explaining our challenge to raise funds for program and operational costs. I wish to thank everyone who stepped up and supported that effort. It is deeply appreciated and has given us a solid footing to start 2019. In this letter, I wish to take you back to the roots of the organization, how Trailblazer got started.

When our daughter went off to college, co-founder Scott and I decided to quit our jobs in 2001 and go into service through an international volunteer agency. We signed on to two years of volunteer placements. The first year, those experiences took us to work on a remote island in Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand, Kosovo, and Estonia. We volunteered through established non-government organizations [NGO] with programs in those countries and each placement had a unique project. It was in route between New Zealand and Kosovo that we first visited Cambodia. We fell in love with the country, the people, and saw the need.

The second year we took our daughter to Fiji and Samoa, and then went to Vietnam, followed by researching a placement in Cambodia. While in Cambodia we worked independently, as we were unable to find an NGO we felt we could trust at the time.

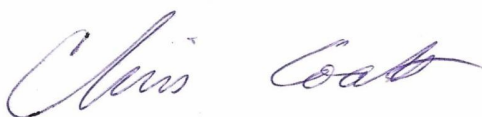
When we returned to the States in 2003, we realized 1) that volunteering was our “niche”, 2) we had learned effective implementation methods, and 3) we wanted to return to Cambodia. Our friends wanted to support us in this endeavor, before Trailblazer existed, and did so under the name of Why Leigh Cares. Leigh was a friend who cared and donated the first \$200 to give us the kick-start needed.

Upon our return we decided in order to do things right we would have to establish our own non-profit. Another friend, Doug, helped create our charity's name. We were sitting in our living room brainstorming names. Doug said, “you two are out there blazing trails!” His statement gave birth to Trailblazer Foundation, and Scott and I then created our logo. The rest is history.

As Trailblazer has evolved and grown over the past 15 years, our increasing base of donors has been and continue to be the backbone of the organization. I cannot express enough how grateful I am to have witnessed the tremendous support being received to change lives for the better, because donors like you care. Your investment truly makes an impact. I cannot imagine doing anything more rewarding.

As various holidays or special events occur, don't forget that you can dedicate your gift in honor or memory of someone special. Your gift can draw others into a celebration of life and be a gift that keeps on giving! When you care enough you can change the world, so be a hero for someone today.

Thank you.



Chris Coats
Co-Founder and Executive Director



Health Program

Access to Better Sanitation

Most people are aware of the direct connection between good health and the ability for a person to prosper. In most developing countries, this idea manifests itself as children being able to go to school when they are healthy, and parents having enough time and energy to work in the store, the home, or the fields.

For Trailblazer, providing access to clean water includes both digging wells to access water, and constructing and delivering bio-sand water filters to purify both surface water and well water (the latter of which is cleaner than surface water, but still not always safe to drink). By the end of 2018 Trailblazer had distributed 405 water filters, reducing disease with safe drinking water, and drilled 129 wells, giving increased access to water for better sanitation.

Also, as part of our commitment to increase the health of rural Cambodians, Trailblazer works with our partner villages to build latrines. As highlighted by the United Nations, it is important for any health program in a developing nation to focus on “the importance of toilets in supporting better nutrition and improved health. Lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation, along with the absence of good hygiene practices, are among the underlying causes of poor nutrition.” Latrines significantly reduce the risk of diarrheal disease, child mortality, and mortality from diarrhea. Multiple studies found that access to latrines leads to a median 26% reduction in diarrheal disease, a 55% reduction in child mortality, and a 65% reduction in mortality from diarrhea.

We are happy to report that Trailblazer has received enough funding to construct 15 latrines in the coming months, which at an average family size of 5 will directly benefit 75 individuals. Trailblazer provides the basic set-up for new latrines (concrete septic tanks and latrine floor), and trains the villagers on the proper use and care of each latrine. Villagers invest in the project by providing dirt for the latrine’s foundation, some of the labor to build the latrines, and by constructing the latrines’ walls and roof structure. These benefits are followed by comfort, health improvement, safety, convenience, privacy, and prestige.



Latrine Construction

DONATE NOW



Please visit our website for more information about our Health Program:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/health-program>

Food Security Program

Improving Quality and Quantity of Food

Along with clean water and reducing diseases food security is one of the highest priorities for any human. Malnutrition is a leading cause of sickness and death in Cambodia (as with much of the world). Compounding this issue is the fact that low agricultural productivity often means there is little, if any, surplus from the family garden to sell as income. Low income leads to continued poor nutrition and poor health. The most direct route to countering these threats is regular access to beneficial foods. Trailblazer Foundation's Food Security program is focused on improving the quality and quantity of food our rural partners eat, thereby reducing the villagers' hunger and poverty.

In 2018, Trailblazer provided agricultural trainings to a total of 887 people (10 to 15 participants for each training course) on horticulture and soil management, composting, organic pesticide and fertilizer, and homestead gardening. At the conclusion of each training, the graduates received some supplies and/or educational materials to help them incorporate their new skills and knowledge into their on-going agricultural pursuits. With each trainee representing an average family size of 5, all totaled, our agricultural trainings directly benefitted 4,435 people.



Homestead Garden Training

DONATE NOW



Please visit our website for more information about our Food Security Program:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/food-security-program>

Education Program

Benefitting Thousands of Students for Years to Come

Inauguration ceremonies for the Beng and Tapang primary schools were held January, 30 and 31, 2019 respectively. These school buildings will service up to 960 students, 480 students per school. Donor representatives from the British Schools Foundation, Chris Petri Family Foundation and Abercrombie and Kent Philanthropy were in attendance. Our donor, Four Girls For Families visited the Beng School in February. These schools have become a reality for the current students, and will benefit thousands of students for years to come.



Tapang School

We are also very excited to report that we have received funding to purchase 40 bicycles this spring for students headed to the secondary level of school. This is a great start to our 2019 goal of 100 bicycles. Bicycles make a huge impact in the lives of students and their families by giving students a way to get to and from school, and become the hope of their families for a better life.

One example is a story of Salong. Salong's family is very poor with one old bicycle that her father uses to get to work in their rice field outside the village. Sometimes her father would take her to school on the bicycle, but was often too busy so Salong would miss school. Salong received a bicycle from Trailblazer and can now happily get to and from school safely, and her father does not need to miss work to support the family.



DONATE NOW

Please visit our website for more information about our Education Program:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/education-program>

Economic Development Program

Providing Technical Assistance to Grow Higher Value Crops

Once Trailblazer has helped our partner villages secure clean and abundant water, and nutritious and plentiful food) the critical next step for helping adults progress from “survival to sustainability” is to support them in establishing livelihoods. Fifty-five percent of the people in Siem Reap Province live in poverty, with an average wage of less than USD \$2 a week.

To address this lack of income opportunities, Trailblazer provides technical support for villagers who wish to start or expand a small-scale agriculture business. Specifically, we pursue strategies to enhance the return on investment for what participating farmers will receive for their agricultural pursuits, marketing of villagers’ products, and establishing and supporting local “Village Fund” micro-finance loan programs.

Throughout 2018, Trailblazer staff continued working on a weekly basis with 25 farmers of the Farmer Community Group [FCG] providing technical assistance to grow higher value crops and marketing consultancy. Trailblazer staff also conducted refresher courses on village funds for 24 villages, and introductions on savings group and microfinance processes to 12 new villages.



A successfully growing FCG garden



Please visit our website for more information about our Economic Development Program:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/economic-development-prog>

Other News

Highlights of Cambodia Visits

Four Girls for Friends [a substantial donor] visiting the Beng school in February.

"We had a fantastic visit. My children were so happy to be able to meet the children. They actually all stayed for an hour after school was over and my children played with all the children on the playground. They played volleyball, soccer, hopscotch, ring-around-the-rosie, and many other games. I think it was the highlight of the trip. I am attaching a photo of my daughter Emmy and one of the school boys. It was a great day! I know my children would love to visit the school again on our next trip to Cambodia. It really was their favorite event of the trip. It made everyone so happy." Joanne with Four Girls for Friends



During Chris Coats' annual trip to Siem Reap, she was tasked to capture videos for the purpose of creating an introduction/orientation video to be used for incoming future volunteers on the process and what activities they could expect to participate in as a volunteer. There were several volunteers working on the Trailblazer work site who helped her with this task. This video eventually will be linked on the Trailblazer website and help us in our efforts to better prepare and inform volunteers prior to their arrival.



Volunteers at work site.

For more information about volunteering:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/volunteers-%2F-visitors-1>



Trailblazer Foundation

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