



# Year-End 2019 Newsletter

*News from Trailblazer Foundation—  
Looking Forward 2020 Vision...*



Bio-Sand Water Filter Given In Memory Of

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***Developing Ripples of Sustainability through Community Water Projects***

# A Note From Trailblazer's Executive Director



Hello Trailblazers!

It's hard to believe we are coming to the close of yet another year. And I'm happy to say that it has been a successful year for our work in rural Siem Reap province because of your continued and generous support. We feel blessed and give you our heartfelt thanks.

You may wonder what sort of improved quality of living you helped make a reality in 2019. Because of your contributions, over 6,000 rural villagers have increased access to water, clean drinking water, improved sanitation, and the ability to better feed their families. Six-thousand is an impressive number. Your gifts truly have the power to change lives, now and into the future.

## ***So, what did your support specifically provide for?***

As of the end of October 2019, Trailblazer had:

- ◆ Distributed 462 water filters, reducing disease with safe clean drinking water and directly benefitting 2,310 villagers.
- ◆ Drilled 97 wells, giving increased access to water for personal and agriculture purposes and directly benefitting 485 villagers.
- ◆ Constructed 43 latrines to improve sanitation and hygiene, a benefit to 215 villagers.
- ◆ Conducted 65 trainings in agriculture for increased success with homestead gardens, a benefit to 650 farmers, a total of 3,250 villagers.

*(The beneficiary totals are calculated based on the fact that typically the average family size is five individuals.)*

Without the consistent year-round support from donors like yourselves, our efforts to raise rural Cambodian families out of poverty and into more sustainable livelihoods would come to an end. You play a direct and beneficial role in improving the health, food security, education, and economic development for rural communities.

We hope you will join us again and keep our 2020 program goals solidly funded. You can give in honor or memory of someone special now, or for the holidays! As you consider making a gift - that keeps on giving - donations can be made by using the enclosed envelope, or by using the DONATE button on our website.

With deep gratitude,

Chris Coats  
Co-Founder and Executive Director



# Health Program

## *The Impact of Volunteers*

A large part of our water filter operations involve having volunteers prepare the filtration media and help with deliveries. Trailblazer is fortunate and grateful for all those who have worked to make our Health Program activities successful. In 2019 alone, there were nearly 100 new volunteers who came to our work site and took part in our bio-sand water filter activities.

Here is just one story from two volunteers who have returned several times to help.

*In 2012 Helen and Alan decided to visit Cambodia as a family. "Myself, husband, daughter and one of her mates tagged along. It was a wonderful experience visiting the Angkor Wat temples and other sightseeing areas in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, but mostly we enjoyed meeting the people. So calm, friendly and genuinely nice people. After a little while we came to understand that a large portion of the population were living without the basic necessities of life. The main one, of course, is clean drinking water.*

*On our return to Australia we discussed the fact that the Cambodian people needed assistance and that we would like to do something to help. We returned to Siem Reap the following year to check out various NGOs and we had the good fortune to meet with the original founders of Trailblazer. We loved what they had to say about the work they were doing based around providing clean water, i.e. wells and bio-sand filters. We then committed to not only donating to the cause but volunteering at the work site on a yearly basis. Since that time, we have had the pleasure of seeing Trailblazer's great work, and being part of it has brought so much joy and satisfaction to us both. To help make the bio-sand filters, deliver them to the villages and see the smiles it brings is wonderful.*

*We are always welcomed with open arms and we not only enjoy the company of the young Cambodian people that Trailblazer employs, but we have made life-long friends from all parts of the world. We just love being part of it and would highly recommend the experience to others. In fact, when we return next, we will be bringing some friends with us so they can enjoy the same experience."*

**VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL**



**[DONATE NOW](#)**

Please visit our website for more information about our Health and Volunteer Programs:

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

# Food Security Program

## *Agriculture Trainings Pay Off*

To date, Trailblazer has conducted 65 agricultural trainings on horticulture and soil management, composting, organic pesticide and fertilizer, and homestead gardening. At an average of 10 participants for each training course, all totaled, including the farmers and their family members, these trainings benefitted 3,250 people.

Mr. and Mrs. Van Sor and their three children live in a village about an hour outside of Siem Reap. They farm two hectares of land a little way from their village, and have been growing rice and vegetables on it for many years. The Sor family were one of 25 farming families in this area to be part of the Food Security Program run by Trailblazer.

Board President, Justine Auton, met the family and talked about the impact of the program with Mr. Yang Chanto, Trailblazer's Food Security Manager. Chanto began by explaining that the first step, when working with farmers new to the program, is to assess their land to determine which crops will grow and how best to improve the soil. The second step is to engage with the local market to find out types of crops, in what amounts, and of what quality are most desirable. Chanto emphasized that the link between the farmer as the producer and the market as the buyer was critical for the development of individual farming families.

Chanto explained that the program's success relied on working alongside farmers intensely for a year, teaching them how to maximize their yield of quality produce and nurture their land so they could grow more over time. The ongoing assessment, advice and recommendations tailored to each farmer over the first year was followed up with periodic checking-in and practical advice in the second year.

The Sor family completed the program and have experienced real benefits from having participated in the program. Mrs. Sor told Justine, "Our lives are easier, less stressful." She said, "We now grow better rice and vegetables. We have vegetables to take to the market all year round now. It used to be just one crop."

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Board President, Justine Auton, meeting with the Sor family.

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

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



# Food Security Program

## *Agriculture Trainings Pay Off (continued)*

Chanto reported that the family's income had increased about 150% with potential to increase even more. The family had also diversified and were raising cows to sell for beef. The big shift was that the family had gone from growing food just to feed themselves to focusing on the business of making a sustainable income by supplying the local market.

The family is experiencing the added benefits of having had a water well installed by Trailblazer. Having the water to use on the crops, the cows and for the family means they can manage easily through the dry season. "Our lives are changed," Mrs. Sor, "Before, we just had a little money and now we have a lot more. We work a lot more and it is good for my husband and our children."

The Sor family is looking ahead. They plan to secure a water filter from Trailblazer and to buy some adjacent land so they can increase their production. Participation in the program has truly paid off for the Sor family. Families like the Sors, rely on foods they can grow in their homestead gardens and rice field. Trailblazer's mission is to provide increased food security by training rural farmers to better feed their families, thereby reducing malnutrition and starvation of rural families.

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Mrs. Sor told Justine, "We now grow better rice and vegetables."

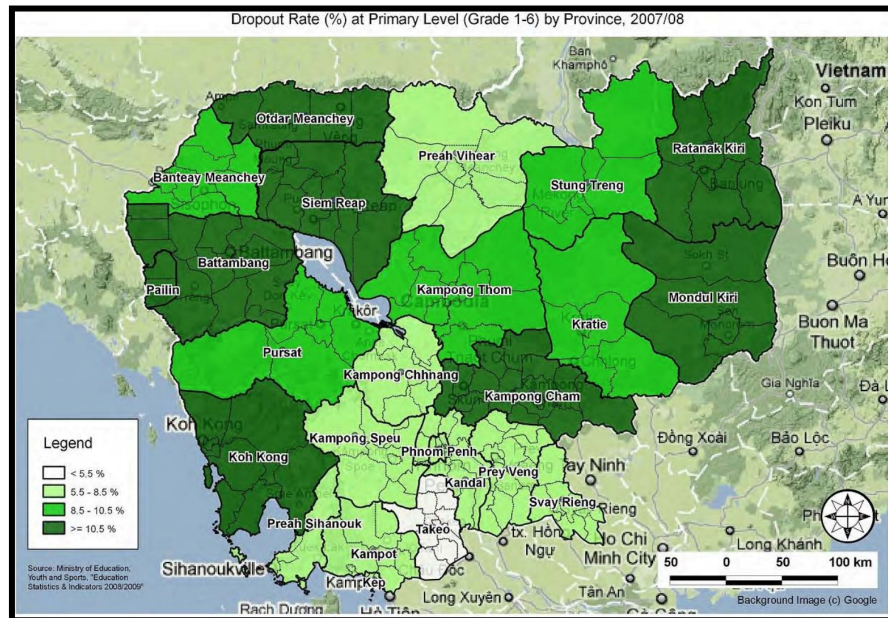
Please visit our website for more information about our Food Security Program:

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

# Education Program

## *Students are Able to Continue in School*

The inaugurations of Tapang and Beng primary schools were held in January! These school buildings can serve up to 960 students, 480 students per school, and thousands of students will attend these schools for years to come.



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This map indicates dropout rates across Cambodia as of 2007/08. Siem Reap province had a higher than 10.5% rate across the province. In early 2010, the Department of Education officials approached Trailblazer requesting our help to address this serious issue by delivering bicycles to keep students in school.

We are happy and proud to report that we have distributed a total of 465 bicycles since 2010 to help this cause and keep students in school. This year a total of 92 bicycles have been distributed, due to the generous contributions received.



Trailblazer Foundation has distributed a total of 465 bicycles since 2010.

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

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



# Economic Development Program

## *Farmers Continue to Succeed and Grow Their Business*

Trailblazer staff continued to work with the Farmer Community Group [FCG] and provided technical advice 18 times during the year to ensure their success and growth.



Farmers are significantly more successful after Trailblazer's training and assistance

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A comparison between the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 continue to show that all farmer members are significantly more successful after Trailblazer's training and assistance, with an average income increase of 150%. Due to this success, Trailblazer is planning to establish a second Farmers Community Group in 2020 in a new community. Trailblazer staff will start this process by conducting meetings, providing technical agriculture training, and helping make marketing connections.



Trailblazer continues to work with the FCG and provided technical advice



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

## Staff Highlight

### *The Man Behind the Scenes* By Justine Auton



During my third volunteer experience at Trailblazer earlier this year, I took some time to learn more about the man at the heart of what we do in Cambodia, Mr. Sor Ratanak, Director of Trailblazer Angkor [Trailblazer Foundation's affiliate organization] and the person in charge of field operations.

Ratanak has been successfully delivering our programs for several years now, and I wanted to find out what was behind his passion for this challenging work – so I asked him.

"I want a better future for the children, and they won't get that if they don't know what better looks like - what is possible," Ratanak told me. Ratanak explained that all of the good things we deliver; the water filters, wells, latrines and agricultural training are important, but helping parents have a vision for their children's futures was essential.

**Selling a different future requires a relentless approach, so how does Ratanak do it?** "I talk to people – talking, meeting, building relationships. I talk to people all the time. You need to understand, Cambodians are naturally very shy people. They don't want to talk about their problems, but we need to understand what is really going on so we can work effectively with families. This is the most important thing."

**I told Ratanak I'd seen some changes in Siem Reap. There is more building work, the area around Trailblazer's work site was developing. Is this a sign that overall life in Cambodia is getting better for everyone?** "No," Ratanak said, "the Cambodian government is focused on the big picture of the economy and infrastructure projects in other parts of the country. The trickle down to Siem Reap is not happening so our villages still have to rely on themselves with the support of NGO's."

**So how does Ratanak think we're doing?** "We still have so much to do. Trailblazer works in four districts with 55 villages. We work intensively with a village until 60%-80% of the families are supplied with access to clean water before moving on to another village. Many families share the resources [well and/or filter] so there is never a 100% coverage with every family having their own well and/or filter. Trailblazer is always available to return in the future, if a family decides they want their own well or filter. What is important to me is that we always meet our commitments. What we promise is what we deliver. This gives us credibility and the people trust us because of it."

"Of course, we have to scale our work to our resources. I'm always thinking about cost, time and energy. I'd like to see more people volunteering so they have the opportunity to come to the villages and see for themselves how people live and the level of need, and that might lead to more support and resources."

I asked Ratanak one last question – **what inspired him every day?** "The smiles. I like to see the smiles."

Please visit our website for more information about our Staff:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/our-staff>



# Additional News

## *Trailblazer's 2020 Program Goals*

The various lists of needs have been received from Trailblazer's district partners. With this information, we have determined that our work in Angkor Thom district is concluded – which is a good thing to know, the communities in that district have their water needs met. Now we have been asked to expand our work into Banteay Srey district.

Based on these identified needs and district requests, Trailblazer's goal for 2020 is to:

- ♦ Install 415 bio-sand water filters, reducing disease with safe drinking water and directly benefitting 2,075 people
- ♦ Drill of 111 wells, giving increased access to water and directly benefitting 555 people
- ♦ Agriculture trainings to 920 farmers benefitting 4,600 individuals –
  - ⇒ 23 Horticulture/Soil Management,
  - ⇒ 31 Compost/organic pesticide/fertilizer, and
  - ⇒ 38 livestock [chicken/duck] raising theory and practice
- ♦ 73 Village Fund refresher courses, and establishment of up to 7 new Village Funds.

Many villages that Trailblazer works with have their basic needs met and are now seeking sanitation solutions to prevent the spread of illnesses. Trailblazer recently learned of the tremendous need for 3,848 latrines for villages in four of the twelve districts in Siem Reap province: Soutr Nikum = 825 latrines; Prasat Bakong = 783 latrines; Banteay Srey = 716 latrines; and Pouk = 1524 latrines.

Part of Trailblazer's Health Program plan for 2020 is to provide latrines to as many families as possible, within identified villages of these four districts.

**Did you know that places of worship make contributions to programs like Trailblazer?**

This latrine was made possible by donation from Christ Episcopal Church



As we look forward to meeting the list of needs for 2020 in our four programs, here is how your gift(s) can be part of changing a family's life!

- ♦ \$55 buys a bicycle to keep a student in school
- ♦ \$50 supports a rural farmer's agriculture training course
- ♦ \$80 buys a bio-sand water filter
- ♦ \$175 buys a latrine
- ♦ \$320 buys a well
- ♦ \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help out as much as possible

To Donate Online:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/donate>



## **Trailblazer Foundation**

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PO Box 271767  
Fort Collins, Colorado 80527