

# Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Annual Report 2021-2022

Rotary Club of Gravenhurst

Rotary Wheels for Learning is an international project conducted in Cambodia. The project provides bicycles to disadvantaged rural children, and funds Water Sanitation and Hygiene projects at rural schools throughout Cambodia.

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## Outline

This report covers the RWFL Bicycle Distribution and completed projects for 2021-2022, and outlines the planned projects and bicycle distributions for 2022-2023.



## ROTARY WHEELS FOR LEARNING ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023

### Rotary Wheels for Learning Aim

The Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Program is an international humanitarian project. In its eleventh year, the project's aim is to provide a means for children to get to school, and make sure they remain healthy while attending school. We achieve this in two ways.

First, we build, repair and then distribute bicycles to impoverished rural children so they may have the opportunity to attend school. As many of the impoverished children in Cambodia have to walk three to five kilometers to school, they simply cannot attend without the aid of a bicycle. Shortcuts through fields and jungle offer the prospect of encountering long forgotten landmines, unexploded ordinance, or poisonous snakes.

Second, we identify and fund critical Education, as well as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) projects at the rural schools so the children can remain healthy and stay in school. School infrastructure in rural Cambodia is either very old, in a state of disrepair, or non-existent. Without wells, latrines, and wash areas, the children have no way of using the washroom, cleaning their hands, or having water to drink during the day. This lack of critical infrastructure further disadvantages adolescent girls, who generally drop out of school once they start to menstruate.

### Why Cambodia

Cambodia experienced significant turmoil in its recent history, and only since early 2000 has the country been at peace. During the Khmer Rouge years (1975-1979), life in 'Democratic Kampuchea' was strict and brutal. The party's aim was to establish a classless communist state based on a rural agrarian economy and a complete rejection of the free market and capitalism. To accomplish this, they abolished money, free markets, schooling, private property, foreign clothing styles, religious practices, and traditional Khmer culture. Public schools, pagodas, mosques, churches, universities, shops and government buildings were shut or turned into prisons, stables, re-education camps and granaries. There was no public or private transportation, private property, and non-revolutionary entertainment. While figures on the number of people who died during the Khmer Rouge's rule are disputed, most estimates say between 1.4 million and 2.2 million people starved to death, died of disease, or were murdered out of a population of just 8 million.

One of the significant long-term impacts of this genocide is a general lack of support in the rural areas of Cambodia. Where they exist, hospitals, clinics and schools are often located great distances from the villages making it very difficult for villagers to access them. Children that can attend school are often prevented from doing so as the distances to the school are significant. Rural children often have important chores they need to accomplish at home, such as gathering fire wood, going to the local well or pond for the family's water, or working in the rice fields – all taking precedence over a formal education. (Short, Philip. *Pol Pot*. Holt, 2004)

## RWFL Team 2022

From 10 February to 5 March 2022, 13 Rotarians and Friends participated in the RWFL Project. This year's team, forever known as **RWFL Team COVID-19**, was made up of Rotarians representing four clubs within District 7010 as well as friends of Rotarians. Team members came from many corners of Canada including Victoria BC, Nunavut, North Bay, London, and Ottawa. We had a teacher, Doctor, financial expert, retired Canadian Navy and Army members, IT specialist, and a millwright.

The team faced many challenges as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions in place by both Canada and Cambodia. Restrictions on movement, cleaning requirements, masking while working in the hot sun for hours, difficulties with departure testing, added personal expenses, and the constant worry of contacting COVID-19 all added up. Indeed, some of our team did catch COVID-19 in Cambodia, however we were blessed to have our very own Doctor, several locals who ensured we wanted for nothing, and an exceptional hotel staff at the *Anik Palace Hotel* who went out of their way to guarantee our recovery was as comfortable and as fast as could be. We will forever be thankful for their assistance.

## Financial Summary

Financial donations were provided by 11 Rotary Clubs (\$19,300.00), while Rotary District 7010 supported 2 district level grants (\$6000.00). We were given three sizable donations from Horizant Inc Ottawa (\$10,500.00), Exhaust Direct London (\$2500.00) and Stinson Toronto (\$2500.00). The remainder of our fundraising was achieved through the fundraising activities of our 13 RWFL Team members (\$33,968.64).

Rotary Club	Bikes	Project	Team Members
Collingwood	X		
District 7010 Grants		X	
Gananoque		X	
Gravenhurst	X	X	X
Kirkland Lake		X	
Minden (mbr)		X	
Niagara Falls		X	
North Bay - Nippissing		X	X
Orillia		X	X
Perry Sound		X	
Toronto WEST		X	X
Private Companies	Bikes	Project	Team Members
Horizant (10,500.00)	X	X	X
Stinson (2500.00)	X	X	X
Exhaust Direct (2500.00)		X	
Woodview Inn (350.00)		X	

(Overview of donors and Rotary Club Team members)

Total funds expended in support of the bicycles and WASH projects was \$74,768.64 Canadian. A breakdown of costs is provided below.

<b>Summary of Expenses: 2021-2022 (US Funds)</b>	
Bicycle Purchase / Transport Fees	\$24,648.00
Purchase of spare parts	\$800.00
Locals (wages and expenses)	\$1,350.00
Ceremony Costs (tents, chairs, security, PA system)	\$1,340.00
Bus Rental, tool purchase	\$3,350.00
Misc Costs (phone, COVID-19 test kits, storage fees)	\$625.00
Water filters	\$1,100.00
School Renovation Kampong Speu	\$10,000.00
New Well and renovated latrine RSVP	\$2,000.00
Build and install 85 latrines	\$10,700.00
Food Distribution PIO and Orphanage	\$2,500.00
<b>Total US Funds</b>	<b>\$58,413.00</b>
<b>Total converted to Canadian Funds</b>	<b>\$74,768.64</b>

### Summary of 2022 Accomplishments

- 624 bicycles built, repaired and distributed over 8 distribution sites
- Complete school WASH renovation (latrines, wash area, well, storage tanks, playground)
- Distributed 14 Twenty Litre water filters for schools
- Built and Installed 85 latrines in 3 villages
- Built new well and renovated existing wash area (RSVP schools)
- Conducted food distributions at Peoples Improvement Organization (Phnom Penh) and Orphanage (Kampong Speu)
- Provided soap and wash towels for 1 year for 6 schools
- Delivered 200 lbs of school supplies
- Delivered 200 *Days for Girls* feminine hygiene packages

### RWFL Bicycle Distribution

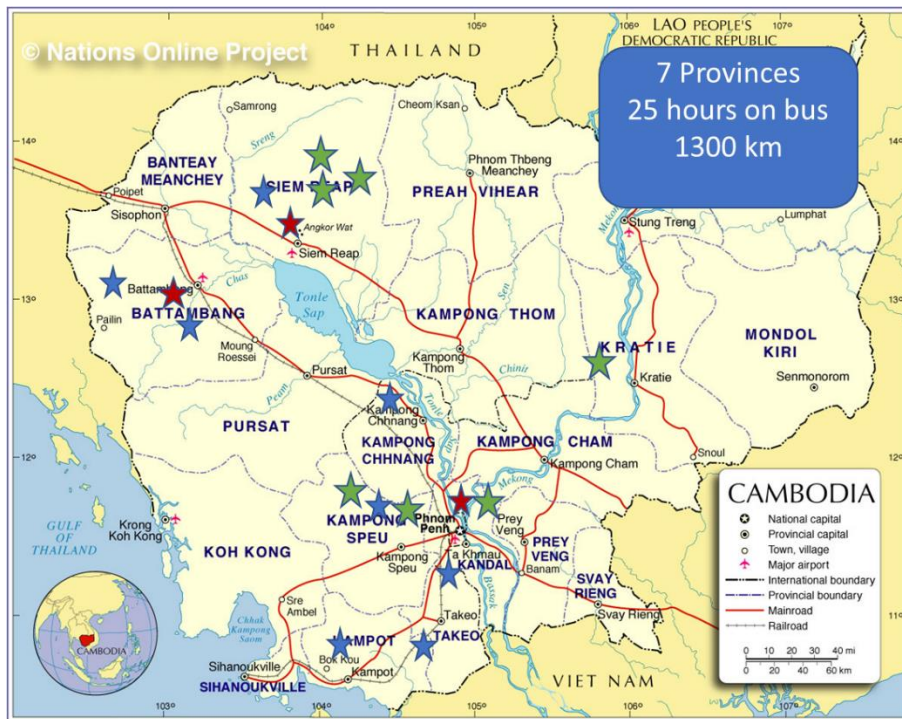
This year we completed our **10,000th bicycle** as part of the RWFL Project. The number is impressive and is a testament to the importance of this project as we continue to support rural Cambodian children.

The team travelled to 7 different provinces (Takeo, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Phnom Penh, and Kampot) and covered more than 1300 km which equated to 25 hours of riding the bus. We had 8 bicycle distributions with each site receiving 78 bicycles (see map).

The bicycles are purchased in Phnom Penh for \$37.00 US, and then transported to the actual distribution site

the repairs and verify the serviceability. Spare parts are purchased in Phnom Penh prior to the first distribution so that we are equipped to make all necessary repairs; typically 1 in 2 bicycles require some type of repair (tire change, tube repair, brake cable replacement, chain adjustment). Our goal is always 100 % serviceability for each bicycle so that every child receives a bicycle that is as close to new as possible.

We expended 570 hours of direct labour on bicycle assembly, and another 110 hours of labour conducting repairs. Including the distribution ceremony and travel times to the site, total hours expended toward the bicycle distribution project was 722 hours.



(Red stars indicate distribution hubs, blue stars indicate bicycle distribution locations, green stars represent project locations)



(Arrival of the bicycles, left, and organizing the assembly process, right)



(Four time returnee Theresa MacRory and Nadia Doucet assembling a bike, left, Mario De Marinis, center, and Randy Scott conducting detailed repairs)



(Typical distribution ceremony, left, Mike Cole receiving token of appreciation from the District, center, and the District Governor of Kampong Speu addressing the children)



(Happy children receiving their bicycles from Mikala Bruder, left, and RWFL Team 2022 – 10 years, 10,000<sup>th</sup> bicycle celebration)

## Presentation of Paul Harris Fellows

This year, the President of the Rotary Club of Gravenhurst, and Rotary International recognized 2 long standing supporters of the RWFL Program. The following Cambodians received the Paul Harris Fellow:

**Hem Tola** has been working with the RWFL Program since 2016. During that period, he has organized 6 bicycle distributions within the Province of Kampong Speu, enabling more than 700 local children to have a means of getting to school. He was the first local Cambodian who we worked with on a WASH project. Since that first project, he has been the Project Manager on four school renovation projects totaling more than \$40,000 US. Each school received new wash areas, latrines, a well, irrigation system, renovated playgrounds, and a communal garden that grows vegetables for the children's lunches. As a result of his leadership and efforts, more than 4000 children can attend school in a safe and healthy environment.

**Sophanit Prin** has been associated with the RWFL Project since its first trip to Cambodia. She has been personally responsible for organizing 10 bicycle distributions. As a result of her efforts, more than 1000 children have received bicycles. She has recently taken on an even bigger challenge. Recognizing that many rural villagers do not have direct access to latrines, she asked if there was a way we could help. After providing us with the project plan, we agreed to support the building and provision of 85 latrines in 4 villages.



(Hem tola, left, and Sophanit Prin, right, receiving their Paul Harris Fellow in Cambodia)

## Projects 2022

### School Renovation Project – Tangpor Primary School, Kampong Speu Province

**Sponsors:** *Horizant Inc, Rotary District 7010, Rotary Clubs of Gravenhurst, Niagara Falls, and Kirkland Lake*

This project took place at the Tang Por Primary School, Thpong District during September to October 2021. Tang Por Primary School is one of six primary schools in the commune and currently has 400 students with 8 teaching staff. The school WASH infrastructure was in an extremely poor state, or simply non-existent.

The project consisted of renovating two existing toilet blocks for a total of 5 washroom stalls. A well was drilled 75 meters deep to ensure water is available throughout the school year. The well project included the installation of a 3000 L water storage tank, an electrical pump, and piping to the toilets, wash area and garden (which will grow vegetables for the school children). A new 16 faucet wash area was built, an existing one was renovated, and a year's supply of soap and cloth wash rags for all six primary schools within the District was



provided. Finally, the existing playground was rebuilt to ensure a safe environment for the children who will use it.



(Renovation of one latrine block, left, and building of the 16-faucet wash area, right)



(Renovation of latrine block, left, new well, center, and new concrete pad, right)



(Wash area, left, well and storage tank, center, and renovated playground, right)



(Lia Cole, representing Horizant Inc, Mike Cole representing Rotary, and Hem Tola pose with the teachers from Tangpor Primary School)

## 78 Latrines for Families – Sotre and Nikum Districts, Siem Reap Province

**Sponsors:** *Rotary Clubs of Gananoque, Gravenhurst, Parry Sound, and Rotary District 7010 along with Private Companies Stinson (Toronto), and the Woodview Inn.*

The goal of this project was to enable two districts within Siem Reap Province to become Open Defecation Free (ODF). The project beneficiaries were poor farmers located in Sotre District (Ta Hok Village and Chambok Sor Village) and Nikum District (Chrey Tbong Village and Sala Koh Kos village). The project commenced in September of 2021 and was completed in February 2022. By providing latrines to these families, we were able to address **health, safety, and human dignity** concerns as outlined within the UNICEF, Country Programme 2019–2023 report.

**Health:** In rural Cambodia, poor sanitation is the largest single contributor to the deaths of ten thousand small children each year. According to World Bank-sponsored Water and Sanitation Programme, only 16 percent of rural Cambodians have access to toilets. A typical village with 400 inhabitants deposits around 450 kilos of pathogenic excreta every week. This interacts with a rate of infant and young child mortality 75 per cent higher in rural areas than in urban areas, and with heavy caseloads of diarrhea and other infections

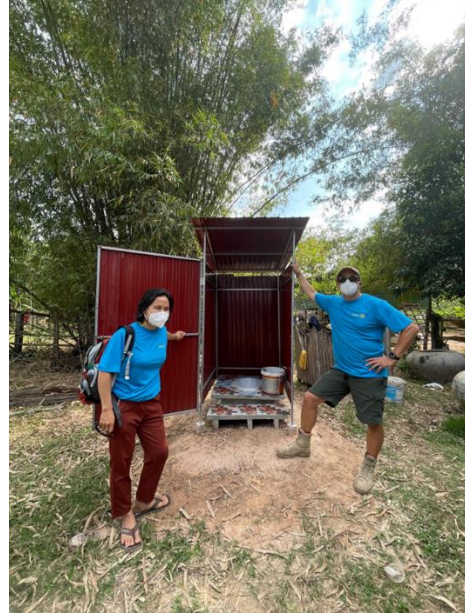
**Safety:** Enabling young girls to use a latrine close to home, rather than going out alone to the woods or a field, where they can be targeted by human predators.

**Human Dignity:** For the family, it provides basic human dignity and reduces the number of days they are sick.

(UNICEF, Country Programme 2019–2023, [CountryProgramme Water, Sanitation & Hygiene.pdf .pdf \(unicef.org\)](#) )



(Assembly of a latrine at Ta Hok Village in Sotre District. On-site assembly typically takes five hours per latrine).



(Finishing up the installation, left, and inspecting the finished product, right)



(Some of the very happy villagers posing in front of their new latrine)

### Water Filters for Schools

**Sponsor:** *Bill Goodwin from Embrun, Ontario*

Approximately 80 percent of all Cambodians living in rural areas have limited access to safe drinking water. This holds true in all of the schools we interact with, although they may have a well, the water still needs to be filtered, or treated to be made safe to drink. To help address this issue, we distributed three 20L water filter systems to each of the schools visited. During our bicycle distribution, we provide a detailed care and use demonstration to the teachers, along with instructional pamphlets in Khmer. These water filter systems have a 5-year life span when used and cared for daily.



(Water filter demonstration at local school provided by Rotarian David Slocum, Orillia)

### RSVP New Well, Desks and Renovate existing Latrine – O KOK School, Kratie Province

**Sponsor:** *Bill Obee, Rotary Club of Minden, Ontario*

For this project, we partnered with the Rural School Village Program (RSVP) to build a well, provide desks, and renovate an existing latrine at the O KOK School. RSVP builds schools in rural villages with limited access to education so children can learn to read and write in Khmer, as well as learn basic math skills. To date, they have built and sustain 27 schools in some of the most remote areas of Cambodia.



(New well head, left, schools desks arriving, center, and renovated latrine, right)

### Food Distribution Program

**Sponsor:** *Exhaust Direct (Kim and Pat Bruder), London, Ontario*

The food distribution project centers around supporting the children who are most vulnerable – those living in extreme poverty and/or within orphanages.

The Peoples Improvement Organization provides schooling, healthcare, dental care, and clothing to children who would otherwise have to work to support their families. By providing rice to the children's families, they in turn get a promise from the parents to allow their children to come to school, instead of working within the city dump. This year we provided 3 months supply of rice.

This year, we also supported the Hopeful Association of the Poor (HAP) orphanage in Kampong Speu, providing them with enough rice, fish, oil, and noodles for 1 month. HAP is a private orphanage that currently has 40 children from the ages of three to eighteen.



(Peoples Improvement Organization, left, and Hopeful Association of the Poor, right, posing with their food donations)



(A warm thank you from one of the happy children at PIO)

## RWFL Team 2022-2023 Bicycle Distribution: 27 January – 18 February 2023

As a result of the COVID-19 travel restrictions being removed, I am pleased to announce we have a full team for RWFL 2023. Our plan this coming year will be to distribute 664 bicycles within six provinces.

### Bicycle requirements 2023

Distribution	# Bicycles	Province
1	52	Kampong Speu
2	102	Kampong Cham
3	102	Siem Reap
4	102	Banteay Meanchey
5	102	Kampong Speu
6	102	Takeo
7	102	Kampot
<b>All distributions</b>		664
<b>US Dollars</b>		<b>\$24,568.00</b>

### RWFL 2022-2023 Projects

RWFL plans to implement the following projects beginning in October 2022. This coincides with the start of the new school year in Cambodia and will enable our RWFL Team 2023 to visit the sites for the official openings in January 2023

### RWFL Projects 2022-2023

Ser	Projects	Location	Cost of Project US Dollars	Sponsored
1	<b>School WASH multi project</b>	Wat Thbeng Primary School Kampong Speu	\$ 9,700.00	Partial
	Renovate 7 toilet stalls (in two buildings)			
	Drill well and install water pump, wiring, irrigation system, 3000 L water storage tank. Build 2 new wash areas for each toilet block			
	Sanitation materials (soap/drying towels for 1 year) for 6 schools Build a playground (none currently exists)	Wat Thbeng Primary School Kampong Speu	\$ 3,000.00	No
2	<b>Portable water filters for 7 schools (21 filters)</b>	7 Schools RWFL will visit	\$ 900.00	No
3	<b>Water filter system for Orphanage</b>	Hopeful Assoc of the Poor Kampong Speu	\$ 1,600.00	Yes
4	<b>Build and install 70 single latrines for families</b>	Siem Reap	\$ 10,100.00	No
5	<b>Rebuild RSVP school</b>	Kon Dom Rey School RSVP	\$ 5,000.00	
6	<b>Food Distribution Program</b>	Phnom Penh and Kampong Speu	\$ 1,500.00	Yes
7	<b>School Supplies</b>	7 Schools RWFL will visit	\$ 500.00	
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$ 59,800.00</b>	

## Financial Support Needs

Fundraising for the construction projects has already commenced. Our goal is to complete the fundraising for the projects by end August so that we can begin the projects in October, with an anticipated completion date in early January. Fundraising for the bicycles will begin in September and will continue until the first week of January, so that the bicycles can be purchased ahead of the team's arrival.

One hundred percent of donations goes towards the projects/bicycles, our team members and local Cambodia volunteers are not paid. Only the actual workers (local contractors) that are hired to construct the projects and our Project Managers are paid.

If you or your Rotary Club can support the funding, or partial funding of any of these projects, or bicycles it would be very much appreciated. Individual donations are tax deductible as RWFL is a registered charity with CRA.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at [rwflteam2018@gmail.com](mailto:rwflteam2018@gmail.com). Alternatively, you can view our past distributions on Facebook, simply type in **Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL)** under search and then request to join the group.

Thank you in advance for your interest in this very worthy cause.

***Imagine Rotary – we make a difference by connecting the world and opening opportunities***

Mike Cole  
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*Rotary Wheels for Learning is a registered charity, created by the Rotary Club of Gravenhurst, which supports sustainable education in Cambodia. Charitable registration # 891556847RR0001*