

Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Annual Report 2022-2023

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 critical Education, 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 2022-2023 and outlines the planned projects and bicycle distributions for 2023-2024.



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 twelfth 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 these children 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 firewood, 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 2023

From 26 January until 17 February 2023, 19 Rotarians and Friends participated in the RWFL Project. This year's team was made up of Rotarians representing five clubs within District 7010 including Gravenhurst, Kirkland Lake, North Bay-Nipissing, Orillia, and Toronto WEST. In addition, we had friends of Rotarians who came from as far away as Nunavut, North Bay, London, and Ottawa.

We had an excellent mix of past participants (many with multiple trips to Cambodia) and first timers. As a result, we quickly formed into a well-oiled team enabling us to complete 7 bicycle distributions without significant problems. Each team member, despite the heat and long days went about their work with a smile on their face and were always looking to help others when they completed their jobs.

Financial Summary

This year, we received financial donations from 11 Rotary Clubs totaling \$23,390.00, and Rotary District 7010 supported 2 District Grants of \$3,672.00. Donations in excess of \$500.00 from private individuals and companies totaled \$13,700.00. The remainder of our budget was achieved through the fundraising activities of our 19 RWFL team members for a total of \$47,517.00.

Total funds expended in support of the bicycles and projects was \$88,279.05 Cdn. A breakdown of costs is provided below.

Summary of Expenses: 2022-2023 (US Funds)	
Bicycle Purchase / Transport Fees	\$27,276.00
Purchase of spare parts	\$750.00
Locals (wages and expenses)	\$1,120.00
Ceremony Costs (tents, chairs, security, PA system)	\$1,290.00
Bus Rental, tool purchase, contingency	\$2,199.00
Misc Costs (phone, storage fees)	\$225.00
Water filters	\$760.00
School Supplies	\$900.00
School Renovation Kampong Speu	\$12,900.00
Rebuild School House (termite damage) RSVP	\$5,000.00
Build and install 57 latrines	\$7,500.00
Water Filter System for school (600+ students)	\$1,200.00
Wash Station Takeo	\$1,850.00
Food Distribution PIO	\$1,520.00
Garbage Incinerator	\$747.25
Total US Funds	\$65,237.25
Total converted to Canadian Funds	\$88,279.05

The summary below outlines Rotary Club and Private Company support, as well as which club RWFL team members came from.

Rotary Club	Bikes	Project	Team Members
Collingwood South Georgian Bay	X		
District 7010 Grants		X	
D7040 Passport Club	X	X	
Barrie Kempenfelt		X	
Gananoque		X	
Gravenhurst	X	X	X
Kirkland Lake		X	X
Minden	X	X	
Niagara Falls		X	
North Bay - Nippissing		X	X
Northumberland Sunrise		X	
Orillia		X	X
Toronto WEST		X	X
Private Companies	Bikes	Project	Team Members
Exhaust Direct (2500.00)		X	

(Overview of Rotary and Private Company donors, and Rotary Club team members)

Summary of 2023 Accomplishments

- 694 bicycles built, repaired and distributed over 7 distribution sites.
- Complete school WASH renovation (latrines, wash area, well, storage tanks, playground)
- Provided soap and wash towels for 1 year for 6 schools.
- Built and Installed 57 latrines in 3 villages.
- Rebuilt termite damaged school (RSVP schools)
- Built a multi tap handwash for a school.
- Built a garbage incinerator for a school.
- Installed a water filter system for a school.
- Distributed 14 Twenty Litre water filters for schools.
- Conducted food distribution at Peoples Improvement Organization (Phnom Penh)
- Purchased and delivered 350 lbs of school supplies.
- Delivered 200 *Days for Girls* feminine hygiene packages.

RWFL Bicycle Distribution

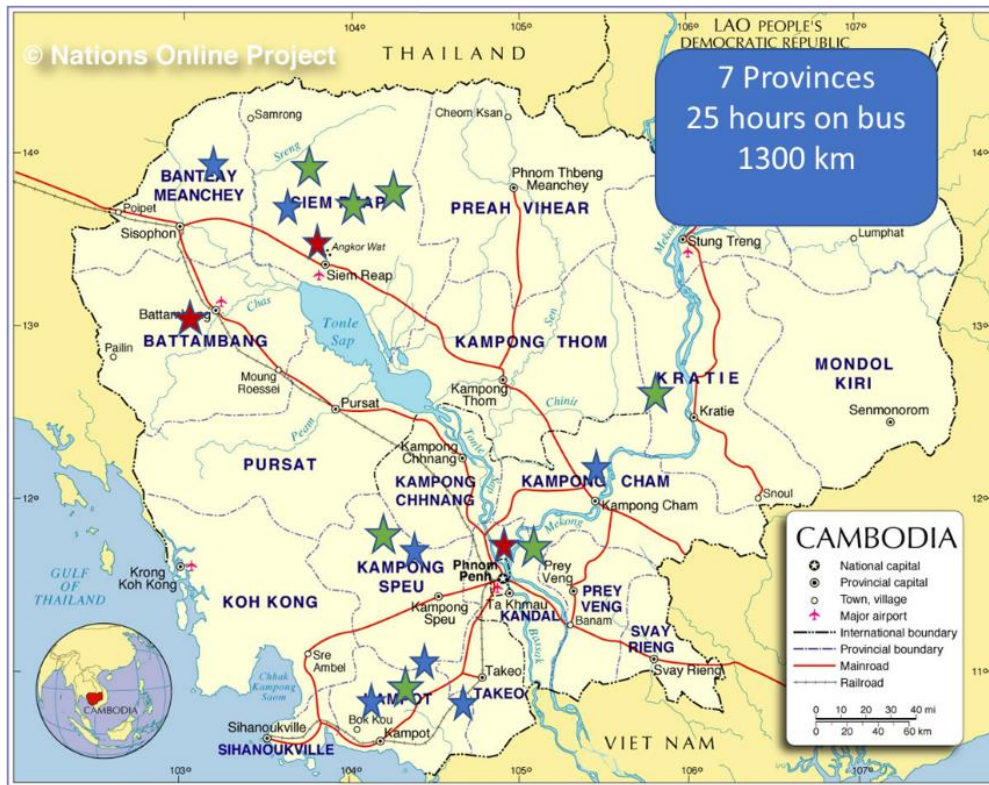
This year we built, repaired and distributed 694 bicycles, making our total **10,694 bicycles** since the project began. The team travelled to 7 different provinces (Takeo, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampong Speu, Kampong Cham, Banteay Meanchey and Kampot) and covered more than 1300 km which equated to 25 hours of riding the bus. We had 7 bicycle distributions with the first site receiving 82 bicycles, and the remaining 6 each receiving 102 bicycles. (See map on next page for general locations of distributions).

The bicycles are gently used and purchased in Phnom Penh for \$37.00 US, and then transported to the distribution sites by a contractor.

Spare parts are purchased in Phnom Penh prior to the first distribution so 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.

This year, we expended 570 hours of direct labour on bicycle assembly, and another 180 hours of labour conducting actual repairs. Including the distribution ceremony and travel times to the site, total hours expended toward the bicycle distribution project was 806 hours.

Note: a new bicycle of similar construction costs approximately \$130.00 US dollars. Total cost for our bicycles is \$40.00 US (includes the bicycle, shipment, and spare parts).



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



(Arrival of the bicycles, left, and bicycle assembly, right)



(RWFL Team 2023 building and repairing the bicycles in advance of the distribution process)



(Distribution ceremony, left, Mike Cole receiving token of appreciation from the District, center, and right, the children waiting patiently)



(A happy child receiving his bicycle from Lia and Mike Cole, left, and the team working under the shade in Takeo Province, right)

Presentation of Paul Harris Fellow

This year, the President of the Rotary Club of Gravenhurst, and Rotary International recognized Theresa MacRory from the Rotary Club of Nippissing.

Reason for Nomination: Her extensive and selfless volunteer work with the Rotary Wheels for Learning Project in Cambodia

Theresa MacRory has been an active participant with the RWFL Program since 2018 and has completed 5 RWFL trips to Cambodia. While part of the bike building team, she also takes on additional secondary roles that greatly assist in the health and welfare of the team members. This includes distributing water and snacks to each team member every 20 minutes while also watching out for signs of heat stress and exhaustion.

In addition to participating, she has raised funds for the purchase of more than 120 bicycles while also personally sponsoring wash areas for schools.

Theresa is the epitome of what Rotary is all about. Highly active within her club's community projects, while also understanding the importance of the international component. She is a pleasure to work with and demonstrates the values of compassion and understanding as she goes about interacting with Cambodians. She is a true ambassador for Rotary International.



(Theresa MacRory (left), receiving the Paul Harris Fellow in Cambodia, and serving the team (right))

Projects 2023

School Renovation Project – Wat Thbeng Primary School, Kampong Speu Province

Sponsors: *Rotary Clubs of Gravenhurst, Kirkland Lake, Minden, Orillia, Collingwood-South Georgian Bay Niagara Falls, D7040 Passport Club, District 7010, and Bill Obee (Minden Rotarian)*

This project took place at Wat Thbeng Primary School, Thpong District from October 2022 to January 2023. Wat Thbeng Primary School currently has 457 students (227 females) with 15 teaching staff. This school was nominated by the District and Commune Chiefs for the renovation project and supported by the RWFL Cambodian representative given its remoteness and condition of the WASH infrastructure, which was in an extremely poor state, or simply non-existent.

The project consisted of renovating two existing toilet blocks with a total of 7 washroom stalls. A well was drilled 65 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 vegetable garden. One new multi-faucet wash area was built, and an existing one was renovated. A new playground was built, and a year’s supply of soap and cloth wash rags were provided that will supply 6 primary schools within the Commune.



(Latrines prior to the renovation)



(Drilling the well, left, building the landing, center, and preparing for the new concrete pad, right)



(Renovated latrine, new walkway and wash area, left, well and storage tank, center, and new playground, right)



(The team with teachers, posing at the Rotary plaque which recognizes the donors who made this school renovation possible)

57 Latrines for Families – Kok Doung, Chambok Sor and Ta Hok village, Siem Reap Province

Sponsors: *Rotary Club of Northumberland Sunrise (6), Rotary Club of Gananoque (1), David Slocum (14), Mario DeMarinis (3), Janice Ranger (6), Laird Coghill (7), Anne and Lionel Motl (7) Rotary Club of Gravenhurst (6)*

The goal of this project was to enable three villages within Siem Reap Province to become Open Defecation Free (ODF) by providing latrines to disadvantaged families within Kok Doung, Chambok Sor and Ta Hok village. From October 2022 until February 2023, 57 latrines were installed within the 3 villages.

This was a cost share project, which saw each family contribute 8-15 % of the total cost of a latrine (based on income). RWFL provided funding for 50 latrines, and the recipients funded the extra 7.

By providing latrines to these families, we were able to address **health, safety, and human dignity** concerns as outlined within the UNICEF, Country Program 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 Program, 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 Program 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)

Water Filters for Schools

Sponsor: *Rotary Club Barrie Kempenfelt*

Without access to safe drinking water, school children in Cambodia are at a much higher risk of contracting debilitating illnesses, many of which can lead to death without medical intervention. According to Water.org, approximately 72 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 two 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 properly.

(Water.Org [Water.org - Water Charity for Safe Water & Sanitation | Water.org](https://www.water.org))



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

Kon Dom Rey School Renovation (RSVP) – Oddar Meanchey Province

Sponsor: *Danielle Gratton, Ottawa, On*

For this project, we partnered with the Rural School Village Program (RSVP) to complete a school renovation at Dom Rey School in Oddar Meanchey Province. 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.

During the COVID 19 pandemic, rural schools were essentially shut down for 2 years. With the infrastructure left to the elements; winds, heavy rains and termites caused extensive damage that required repairing before the children could return to school.

Kon Dom Rey was one of the schools that had sustained significant damage. The school roof and wooden trusses were severely damaged and required replacement. Many of the wooden support boards had been damaged by the infestation of termites. The doors required repair and in some cases replacement, and the entire school needed to be painted to deter the return of termites.



(Pre-renovation showing the damage done by the termites and weather)



(Installation of new side boards, left, and metal roof, right)



(The renovated school)

Multi-faucet wash station - Prey Kdauch Primary School, Takeo Province

Sponsor: *Rotary Club of Toronto WEST, and Ronald Lyons (Rotary Club of Niagara Falls)*

This project was completed at Prey Kdauch Primary School in Takeo Province. The school has a functioning well and latrines but did not have any suitable means for handwashing. The new wash station has 8 taps on one side for washing hands, and another 8 taps on the opposite side for filling buckets and enabling the children to clear themselves before going home. In rural Cambodia, showers and wash facilities within the home consist only of a bucket, and many Cambodians have to walk to the nearest well or pond to fill the bucket.



(The multi-tap wash area will now serve the entire school, helping to eliminate the spread of germs)

Water Filter System – Prey Kdauch Primary School, Takeo Province

Sponsor: *Sean Michael Mayman (In Memory)*

This project consisted of installing a multistage water filter system that was capable of supplying enough drinking water for the school population – 500 students and staff. The system consists of a sediment filter, block carbon filter (1micron) to absorb chlorine, organic matter suspended particles, smell turbidity, a RO Membrane to remove rust, sediment, colloids, algae, giardia and cryptosporidium bacteria, and an Alkaline filter and a UV system.

When the water was tested, it was compared to the bottled water commonly drank in the area, and the filtered water was in a cleaner state.



(The water filtration system, left, testing the water, right, and the final product above)

Garbage Incinerator – Bun Rany Hun Sen Reay Secondary School, Takeo

Sponsor: *Rotary Club of Gravenhurst*

Most rural schools have no access to garbage removal services in Cambodia, making it necessary to burn the waste. During the rainy season, burning is very difficult, so they often leave the waste in piles or bury it in the back of the schools. This practice has secondary efforts as the waste attracts unwanted pests and small animals, and it can seep into the ground water causing contamination.

With the incinerator, the garbage burns completely, and the tall chimney enables the smoke to drift away from the children at the school.



(Building the incinerator, left, center and right, the finished product)

Food Distribution Program – Peoples Improvement Organization (PIO), Phnom Penh

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 and food supplements (cooking oil, dried fish, noodles)



(Mike Cole and Mikayla Bruder with the food donation, left, A warm thank you from a few grade 8 students at PIO who performed a few traditional dances for the team, much to our delight)

School Supplies and Laptop Computers – for all 7 schools we visited.

Sponsor School Supplies: *Mike Kinsey (Rotary Club of Barrie-Kempfenfelt) and Bill and Jean-Maire Cole (Orangeville, On)*

Sponsor Laptop Computers: *Aagnico Eagle (Robert Foster)*

This year, we made school supplies an actual project. In the past we would ask team members to bring along school supplies for the distributions, but realized we were not necessarily bringing what the schools needed. We then solicited the input from Jill Morse, the lead for the Rural School Village Program and a former schoolteacher. With her list, 4 team members and our local hotel manager, Srun Sokheang, spend the first day in Phnom Penh sourcing supplies. Sokheang was invaluable, as she not only negotiated for better prices, but she also made sure we were getting quality items.

The team members packaged the supplies up into 7 equal batches ready for distribution. The teachers were very appreciative and assured us the supplies would go a long way to helping the poorer children remain in school, as they would now have writing materials pens, paper and workbooks.

Thanks to **Aagnico Eagle**, we were fortunate to be able to donate 6 laptop computers to several schools. These laptops will be used by the teachers, enabling them to take advantage of IT technology when completing their assessments, grading and reports.



(School supplies presented by Bill and Jean-Maire Cole, left and right, and laptops presented by Gabrielle Boucher)

RWFL 2023-2024 Projects

RWFL plans to implement the following projects beginning in October 2023. This coincides with the start of the new school year in Cambodia and will enable our RWFL Team 2024 to visit the sites for the official openings in January-February 2024.

RWFL Projects 2023-2024

Project #	Project Description	Location	Cost (US \$)	Cost (Cdn \$)
1	4 room school build (shared project with RSVP) RWFL is sponsoring 1 room of the 4.	Thnai Village Kampong Thom Province	\$7,500.00	\$10,125.00
2	Build 50 Latrines (individual family latrines) - \$140.00 US per latrine	Pouk District Siem Reap Province	\$7,250.00	\$9,787.50
3	Renovate 2 latrines at 2 separate schools to allow access to children with mobility issues (includes larger doors, ramp, handrails)	Pouk District Siem Reap	\$3,200.00	\$4,320.00
4	School Incinerator (schools have no access to garbage removal, difficult to burn during rainy season without incinerator)	Krang Snay Secondary School Kampot Province	\$750.00	\$1,012.50
5	Latrine Renovation (renovate 2 buildings (3 stalls)	Trapeang Chrey Primary School Kampong Trach	\$1,500.00	\$2,025.00
6	New Playground (prepare the ground, install new equipment)		\$3,000.00	\$4,050.00
7	Water Storage Tank, pump and electrical	Svay Am Primary School Kampong Trach	\$1,300.00	\$1,755.00
8	Food Distribution Program (rice, dried fish, cooking oil, noodles)	PIO, Phom Penh	\$1,600.00	\$2,160.00
9	School Supplies for 7 Schools	All Distribution Sites	\$1,000.00	\$1,350.00
			\$27,100.00	\$36,585.00

RWFL Team 2024 Bicycle Distribution: 27 January – 18 February 2024

Our plan this coming year will be to distribute 684 bicycles within six provinces.

Distribution	# Bicycles	Province
1	72	Takeo
2	102	Battambang
3	102	Siem Reap
4	102	Siem Reap
5	102	Preah Vihear
6	102	Kampot
7	102	Kep
All distributions		684
US Dollars		\$25,308.00

Financial Support Needs

Fundraising for the projects has already commenced. Our goal is to complete the fundraising for the projects by end August 2023, 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 the bicycles can be purchased ahead of the team’s arrival.

It’s important to note, one hundred percent of donations goes towards the projects and/or bicycles - our team members and local Cambodian volunteers are not paid. Only the actual workers (local contractors) that are hired to construct the projects are paid. Our local Project Managers receive a small stipend for the services. These funds come from the Rotary Club of Gravenhurst.

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

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

<https://m.facebook.com/groups/1854040031526486/?ref=share>

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

Rotary – Creating Hope in the world!

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