

Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Annual Report 2025-2026

Rotary Club of Gravenhurst

Rotary Wheels for Learning is an international humanitarian initiative operating in Cambodia. The project aims to improve access to education for disadvantaged rural children by providing bicycles, enabling them to travel safely and reliably to school.

Beyond transportation, the initiative also supports vital development efforts by funding projects in **education, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)** at rural schools. These efforts help create healthier learning environments, reduce barriers to attendance, and contribute to the long-term well-being of students and their communities.

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This report covers the RWFL bicycle distribution and completed projects for 2025-2026 and outlines the planned projects and bicycle distributions for 2026-2027.



ROTARY WHEELS FOR LEARNING ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026

Rotary Wheels for Learning Aim

The Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Program is an international humanitarian initiative. Now in its fifteenth year, the program's mission is to help children access education and remain healthy while attending school. We achieve this in two key ways.

First, we build, repair, and distribute bicycles to children in impoverished rural communities, giving them the means to attend school. Many of these children must otherwise walk three to five kilometers each way, making regular attendance extremely difficult. In addition, travelling on foot often requires crossing fields and jungle paths, where there is a risk of encountering long-forgotten landmines, unexploded ordnance, or poisonous snakes.

Second, we identify and fund critical education and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) projects in rural schools to help keep children healthy and in the classroom. School infrastructure in rural Cambodia is often outdated, in poor condition, or entirely lacking. Without access to wells, latrines, and handwashing facilities, students are unable to safely use washrooms, maintain proper hygiene, or access clean drinking water during the day.

This lack of essential infrastructure disproportionately affects adolescent girls, who are more likely to drop out of school once they begin menstruating due to inadequate facilities.

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 indicate 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 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 2026

From January 24 to February 15, 2026, a team of 18 Rotarians and friends participated in the RWFL project. This year's group included Rotarians from four clubs—Gravenhurst, Kirkland Lake, North Bay—Nipissing, and Orillia—along with several friends of Rotary. Team members travelled from across Canada, including Nunavut, Kirkland Lake, North Bay, Guelph, Niagara Falls, and Ottawa. We were also fortunate to welcome a participant from California, USA.

With a strong mix of experienced participants—many having made multiple trips to Cambodia—and first-time volunteers, the team successfully completed seven bicycle distributions with minimal challenges.

Financial Summary

This year, we received financial donations from 11 Rotary Clubs totaling \$26,522.00. Donations of more than \$500.00 from private individuals and companies totaled \$17,600.00. The remainder of our budget was achieved through the fundraising activities of our 18 RWFL team members for a total of \$47,598.27.

Total funds expended was \$91,720.27 Canadian. A breakdown of costs is provided below.

Summary of Expenses 2025-2026 (US Funds)	
Bicycle Purchase / Transport Fees (675 bikes)	\$28,237.50
Purchase of spare parts	\$1,175.60
Locals (wages, hotels, food)	\$1,420.00
Ceremony Costs (tents, chairs, security, PA system)	\$1,120.00
Bus Rental (Rotary Portion)	\$2,100.00
Misc Costs (tools, frames, storage fees, plastic bins)	\$732.00
Project Costs	
Repair Parts for Bicycle Maintenance Day (Rotoract)	\$1,000.00
New Latrines and showers (boys and girls) at HAP Orphanage	\$7,795.00
Bio sand water filter, new latrine, wash area, garbage incinerator	\$10,160.00
Garbage Incinerator	\$910.00
Wash area, latrine, well and water storage tank	\$4,870.00
New Playground	\$1,905.00
School Supplies for 7 schools	\$2,285.00
Water Filters for 7 Schools	\$525.00
Sports equipment for 7 schools and Orphanage	\$534.00
Food Distribution for HAP Orphanage and PIO School	\$2,180.00
Food Distribution for refugees from the Border War	\$0.00
Total US Funds Expended	\$66,949.10
Total in CDN Funds after conversion	\$91,720.27

The summary below outlines Rotary Clubs support (financial and team members):

Rotary Clubs	Bikes	Projects	Team Mbrs
Rotary Club Barrie Kempenfelt		X	
Rotary Club Barrie Huronia		X	
Rotary Club of Banff		X	
Rotary Club of Collingwood SGB		X	
Rotary Club of Gananoque		X	
Rotary Club Gravenhurst	X	X	X
Rotary Club Kirkland Lake		X	X
Rotary Club North Bay Nipissing	X		X
Rotary Club of Orillia			X
Rotary Club of Toronto		X	
Rotary Club of Whistler Millenium	X		

(Overview of Rotary club donors and team members)

Summary of 2026 Accomplishments

- 674 bicycles built, repaired, and distributed over 7 distribution sites
- 136 bicycles repaired during the Bicycle Maintenance Day

Funded, Project Managed and Verified:

- New playground
- Complete upgrade of washrooms and showers (HAP Orphanage)
- Garbage Incinerator x 2
- Bio-sand water filter, 4 stall latrines with urinals and wash area
- Wash area, latrine, and water storage tank
- 3 tons of food distributed at Peoples Improvement Organization
- (Phnom Penh) and Orphanage (Kampong Speu)
- Provided 14, twenty litre water filters for 7 schools
- Purchased and delivered 400 lbs of school supplies (\$2000.00 US dollars)
- Purchased and delivered sports equipment to 7 schools (\$600.00 US dollars)
- Provided 674 new toothbrushes and toothpaste to 7 schools

RWFL Bicycle Distribution

The team conducted distributions across five provinces—Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Siem Reap, Kratie, and Kep—covering more than 1,900 km over approximately 32 hours of bus travel. In total, we conducted seven bicycle builds and distributions. Two sites each received 82 bicycles, while the remaining five sites each received 102 bicycles.

The bicycles are purchased in Phnom Penh at a cost of \$39 USD each and transported to the distribution sites by a local contractor. As these are gently used bicycles, our team of volunteer “bicycle mechanics” conducts repairs and ensures each bicycle is fully serviceable before distribution.

Spare parts are also purchased in Phnom Penh prior to the first distribution, ensuring we are prepared to complete any necessary repairs. Typically, one in every two bicycles requires some level of work—such as tire replacement, tube repair, brake cable replacement, or chain adjustment. Our goal is always 100% serviceability, ensuring that every child receives a bicycle that is as safe and dependable as possible.

The table below shows total costs for bicycles over the last three years.

Year	Bike Cost	Transport fee	Spare Parts	Total US	Total CDN
2024	\$39.00	\$2.00	\$1.15	\$42.15	\$57.75
2025	\$39.00	\$2.87	\$2.34	\$44.21	\$60.57
2026	\$39.00	\$2.67	\$1.74	\$43.41	\$59.47

By comparison, a new bike of similar construction to the ones we distribute costs approx. \$160.00 US (3.7 bikes per new one purchased)

The map below highlights the areas we conducted bicycle distributions, projects and the bicycle maintenance day during RWFL 2026.



(Red stars indicate distribution hubs, blue stars indicate bicycle distribution locations, gold star indicates the location of the bicycle maintenance day, and purple stars represent project locations)



(Arrival of the bicycles (left), tool preparation (right))



(RWFL Team 2026 building and repairing bicycles in advance of the distribution process)



(RWFL Team 2026 pictured with some of the amazing school teachers)



(Distribution ceremony, dental demonstration (top), waiting patiently, and breaking bread together (bottom))



(Just a few of the 674 happy faces after receiving their bicycles)

Projects 2025-2026

Food Distribution Project – Peoples Improvement Organization (Phnom Penh) and Hopeful Association of the Poor Orphanage (Kampong Speu)

Sponsor: *Danielle Gratton, Ottawa On*

The food distribution component of the project focuses on supporting the most vulnerable children—those living in extreme poverty and those residing in orphanages. According to the NGO Friends International, there are an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 street children in Cambodia, with the highest concentration in the capital city of Phnom Penh.

A number of factors contribute to the prevalence of street children in Cambodia, with poverty being the primary driver. Many families simply cannot afford to provide basic necessities for their children, forcing them to survive on the streets or in landfill sites where they collect recyclables to earn money for food.

RWFL has partnered with two organizations to help address this issue. The first is the Peoples Improvement Organization (PIO), with whom we have worked for more than a decade. PIO's mandate is to provide education, healthcare, dental care, and clothing to children who would otherwise be forced to work to support their families. By supplying rice to families, PIO secures a commitment from parents to allow their children to attend school instead of working in dumps or selling goods on the streets.

The second partner is the Hopeful Association of the Poor (HAP), which currently supports 66 children of all ages at its orphanage in Phrey Chum Village, Udong District, Kampong Speu Province. Many of these children have lost their parents to HIV or come from extremely poor living conditions that led their families to place them in the care of the orphanage.



(Team members participating in the ceremony at HAP Orphanage (left), and the rice, fish, noodles, cooking oil, sports equipment right)



(Team members at PIO posing with some of the children and the food donation)

Water Filters for Schools

Sponsor: *Rotary Clubs of Gananoque and Gravenhurst*

Without access to safe drinking water, school children in Cambodia face a significantly higher risk of contracting serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses. According to Water.org, approximately 72 percent of Cambodians living in rural areas have limited access to safe drinking water. This reality is reflected in the schools we visit. While many have access to a well, the water often requires filtration or treatment before it can be safely consumed.

To help address this issue, we provided each school with two 20-litre water filtration systems. During the bicycle distributions, our team also delivers hands-on demonstrations for teachers, along with instructional pamphlets in Khmer outlining proper use and maintenance. When used and cared for correctly, these systems have an expected lifespan of up to five years, offering a sustainable source of safe drinking water for students. Water.Org [Water.org - Water Charity for Safe Water & Sanitation | Water.org](https://www.water.org)



(Team members providing care and use instructions for the water filters to some of the teachers)

School Latrines, Wash Area and Water Storage Tank - Kork Slorklanh PS, Bavel, Battambang

Sponsors: *Rotary Clubs of Toronto West, Gravenhurst and Pattie Lee (Toronto)*

The intent of this project was to provide the school with additional latrines to support the increased enrollment. The latrine is a 2-stall squat type toilet with a cistern inside each stall to enable flushing. The multi-tap wash area is located along the side and back wall of the structure. Both the latrines and wash areas are now fed through the new water storage tank, which ensures adequate water supply during the dry season.



(Completed latrines, wash area and water storage tank at Kork Slorklanh PS, Bavel, Battambang)

New Playground– Anchanh ROUNG Primary School, Kampong Chhnang

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

Playgrounds form an important role in all schools (building muscle, confidence, and coordination). In Cambodia, their role is also to attract the younger children to the school. While playing, they get to see the excitement and energy which older students exhibit while in class. They then go home and talk to their parents about how they cannot wait to go to school when they are old enough.

We were able to have 2 swing sets, 2 merry-go-rounds, a four-sided slide and 2 teeter totters installed. This has been a very big hit at the school and has brought the pre-school children to the school grounds where they can play and begin to see what a school is all about. As there are no daycares in the rural areas, this is their first exposure to a structured learning environment.



(Children using the new playground.)

Latrine and Shower upgrade – Hopeful Association of the Poor (HAP) Orphanage, Kampong Speu

Sponsor: *Rotary Clubs of Banff, Kirkland Lake, Gravenhurst, Anne and Lionel Motl (Fonthill), and Michael Marinigh (Kirkland Lake)*

This project saw the demolition of existing shower and latrine infrastructure in both the girls' and boys' dormitories. The shower and latrine upgrades began with an assessment of the existing plumbing, drainage, ventilation, and structural condition of the space. The workers then removed the damaged or outdated fixtures and replaced all the pipes, flooring, waterproofing, and exterior walls and roofing.

Finally, all new toilets, shower units, taps, tiles, and drainage systems were installed - significantly improving hygiene, water efficiency, safety, and accessibility. The upgraded facilities were tested for

leaks, proper drainage, ventilation, and reliable water flow before being cleaned and handed over for use. In total, the project took 4 months to complete and is now fully operational.



(Demolition of original structure (left), and beginning of the new build (right))





(Finishing touches (top), the completed showers and toilets (middle), and the girls' showers, toilets and a wash area))

School Supplies and Sports Equipment – All 7 Schools

Sponsor School Supplies: *Shelley and Rob McDonald, Andrea Donaldson, Rob Foster and MaryAnne Marshall, and Trevor Hoffman*

Sports Equipment – All 7 Schools and the Peoples Improvement Organization and HAP Orphanage.

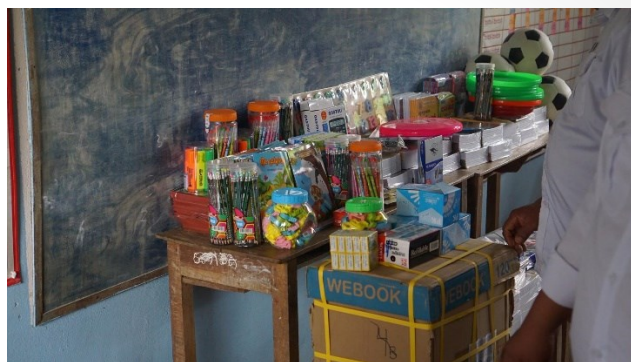
Sponsor Sports Equipment: *Mak Mechanical (Mike Kinsey)*

Our school supplies project grew again this year, enabling us to provide supplies to 7 schools. Again, we solicited the input from local teachers on their needs within the classroom as well as the needs for the children. With the list, three team members and our local hotel manager, Srun Sokheang, spent the first day in Phnom Penh sourcing supplies. Sokheang was invaluable, as she not only negotiated for better prices, but also made sure we were getting quality items.

The team members packaged the supplies up into 7 equal batches for the primary schools. 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.

The sports equipment project is well received by the teachers and students alike. From the moment we arrive at the school until we depart, the children are actively engaged in playing soccer, volleyball or Frisbie.





(Team members preparing the school supplies (top), teachers and team members with the school supplies and sports equipment – showing 3 of 8 distributions)

Rotaract Club of Siem Reap

Rotaract is the young adult division of Rotary International, sharing its mission of community service, professional development, and leadership training. Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) first connected with the Rotaract Club of Siem Reap two years ago when we hosted several of its members during a bicycle distribution project.

This year, we significantly expanded that partnership. After extensive consultation and planning, we collaborated on a bicycle distribution, a bicycle maintenance day, and the funding of key infrastructure improvements, including a new biosand water filtration system, two incinerators, and a multi-stall latrine and wash area.

Bicycle Maintenance Day – Khnar Thnong High School

Donors: Craig Hiscoe (Ottawa), Garry Penner (Steinbach, Manitoba), Kathryn Humphreys (Gravenhurst), Lorraine Diesbourg (Belle River)

During the bicycle maintenance day, a combined team of RWFL members and Rotaractors repaired 136 bicycles. Prior to our arrival, the Rotaract team conducted school visits to identify and assess bicycles requiring significant repairs. Each bicycle was tagged with detailed repair needs, and the team sourced over \$1,000 USD in spare parts from local suppliers, funded by RWFL donors.

On the day of the event, more than 50 Rotaractors and 18 RWFL members worked together to restore the bicycles. Repairs included replacing hubs, bearings, brake cables, seats, and fenders. It was one of the most physically demanding days we have experienced in Cambodia, but also one of the most rewarding.

Of the 136 bicycles, only one could not be repaired. However, to a wonderful surprise, the student who owned it was presented with a brand-new bicycle at the end of the day.



(Various RWFL team members and Rotaractors conducting repairs on the well-used bicycles)



(As Napoleon once said, "An army marches on its stomach." The same held true for our mixed team of Rotaractors and RWFL members. We were incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated group of Rotaract cooks who prepared a fantastic lunch that kept everyone energized and ready for the day's work)



(Just a few of the children and the 136 bicycles we repaired during a long and very hot day—smiles all around made every moment worthwhile)



(The team gathered to celebrate a very successful and rewarding day, filled with shared experiences, learning, and a growing appreciation of each other's cultures)

Latrine Facilities, Wash Area, Biosand Water Filter, and Incinerators – Khnar Thnong High School

Donors: *Rotary Clubs of Collingwood South Georgian Bay, Barrie Kempenfelt, Barrie Huronia, and Mayari Pritzker (Chicago, IL)*

Over the past few years, the school's student population has grown by nearly 20%. While this is an encouraging sign for Cambodia, it has placed considerable strain on the school's existing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.

Through this project, we added three additional toilets for girls, as well as one toilet and two urinals for boys. New multi-tap handwashing stations were also installed for both groups, improving hygiene access across the school.

The installation of a biosand water filtration system now provides clean drinking water for the entire student population throughout the day. This system works by passing water slowly through layers of sand and gravel, which trap dirt, debris, and many microorganisms. A biological layer that forms near the top of the filter helps eliminate harmful bacteria and pathogens, resulting in water that is safer for consumption. Compared to other systems with similar effectiveness, biosand filters are low-maintenance and cost-efficient.

The incinerators address a critical waste management challenge. In rural Cambodia, formal waste collection services are not available, and many schools resort to dumping garbage nearby. This can attract pests such as rats, flies, and mosquitoes, which spread disease, while also creating unpleasant odors and unhealthy conditions.

Incineration reduces waste by burning it at high temperatures, converting it into ash, gases, and heat energy. While it is not the ideal long-term environmental solution, it is an important interim measure that helps protect student health until broader waste management systems can be developed.

The team gathered to celebrate a successful and rewarding day, filled with shared experiences, learning, and a growing appreciation of each other's cultures.



(Overview of the wash area and urinals on the boys' side, and one of the toilets on the girls' side)



(The finished combined washroom and wash area, left side is for the boys')



(Top left, combined team members pose in front of the biosand water filtration system. Bottom left, the filter units, and bottom right, the incinerator)

RWFL 2026-2027 Projects

RWFL plans to implement the following projects beginning in October 2026. This timing coincides with the start of the new school year in Cambodia and will enable the RWFL Team 2027 to visit the project sites for the official openings in January–February 2027

Project	Location	US Funds	CDN Funds
25 Family Latrines (\$140.00 US each)	Siem Reap	\$3,500.00	\$5,040.00
20L Water Filters	All 7 schools	\$900.00	\$1,296.00
Food Distributions supporting vulnerable children	HAP Orphanage, PIO	\$2,500.00	\$3,600.00
School Supplies	All 7 schools	\$2,150.00	\$3,096.00
Sports Equipment	All 7 schools	\$600.00	\$864.00
Days for Girls (Feminine Hygiene)	Banyan Tree Org	\$1,300.00	\$1,872.00
Bicycle Maintenance Day	Siem Reap	\$1,000.00	\$1,440.00
Multi stall latrine and wash area	Battambang	\$3,000.00	\$4,320.00
Multi stall latrine, wash area, and water tank	Battambang	\$3,800.00	\$5,472.00
Playground	Kampot	\$1,300.00	\$1,872.00
Library, furniture, books	Kratie	\$13,000.00	\$18,720.00
		\$61,050.00	\$87,912.00

RWFL Team 2027 Bicycle Distribution: 23 January – 14 February 2027

Our plan this coming year will be to distribute 674 bicycles over seven distributions within five provinces. In addition, we will be conducting a bicycle maintenance day.

Distribution	Date	Day	Province	# Bikes
1	25-Jan-27	Monday	Takeo	82
2	28-Jan-27	Thursday	Battambang Province	102
3	30-Jan-27	Saturday	Battambang Province	102
4	01-Feb-27	Monday	Siem Reap Province	102
5	03-Feb-27	Wednesday	Siem Reap Province	102
6	08-Feb-27	Monday	Kratie Province	82
7	10-Feb-27	Wednesday	Kampot Province	102
				674

Bicycle Maintenance Day - repair of 50 bicycles currently owed by students

	05-Feb-27	Friday	Siem Reap Province	50
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Financial Support Needs

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. 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.

Create Lasting Impact!!

Mike Cole
Chair, Field Coordinator Rotary Wheels for Learning
Rotary Club of Gravenhurst
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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