

Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Annual Report 2024-2025

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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ROTARY WHEELS FOR LEARNING ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 2025

Rotary Wheels for Learning Aim

The Rotary Wheels for Learning (RWFL) Program is an international humanitarian project. In its fourteenth 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 must 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 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 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 2025

From 25 January until 16 February 2025, twenty Rotarians and friends participated in the RWFL Project. This year's team was made up of Rotarians representing five clubs including Gravenhurst, Kirkland Lake, North Bay-Nipissing, Orillia, Wellington, as well as friends of Rotarians. Team members came from many corners of Canada including Nunavut, Vancouver Island, Kirkland Lake, North Bay, Guelph, and Ottawa. We were also fortunate to have a team member come to us from California, USA.

Once again, 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 \$25,156.00, and Rotary District 7010 supported 1 District Grant of \$5000.00. Donations of more than \$500.00 from private individuals and companies totaled \$19,450.00. The remainder of our budget was achieved through the fundraising activities of our 20 RWFL team members for a total of \$41,603.00.

Total funds expended was \$91,209.00 Cdn. A breakdown of costs is provided below.

Summary of Expenses 2024-2025 (US Funds)	
Bicycle Purchase / Transport Fees	\$27,365.00
Purchase of spare parts	\$1,511.00
Locals (wages and expenses)	\$1,320.00
Ceremony Costs (tents, chairs, security, PA system)	\$1,120.00
Bus Rental, tool purchase, contingency	\$2,621.00
Misc Costs (plaques, SIM Card, bank fees, frames, storage fees)	\$695.00
Project Costs	
Build 75 Family Latrines	\$10,700.00
Latrine, Wash Area, Water Storage Tank (Sangkhev PS)	\$3,860.00
Latrine, Wash Area, Water Storage Tank (Yuthitov PS)	\$3,860.00
New Well with electric pump (Bou Chum PS)	\$1,100.00
New Well with electric pump (Dang Het PS) Kratie	\$1,150.00
New Well with electric pump (Kroperseasep PS)	\$1,100.00
New Playground and roof for wash area (Andong Rovieng PS)	\$2,375.00
School Supplies for 7 schools	\$2,147.00
Water Filters for 7 Schools	\$448.00
Sports equipment for 7 schools and Orphanage	\$406.00
Food Distribution for HAP Orphanage and PIO School	\$2,005.00
Total US Funds expended	\$63,783.00
Converted to CDN @ 1.43	\$91,209.00

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

Rotary Club	Bikes	Projects	Team Mbrs
District 7010 Grants	X		
Rotary Club of Banff		X	
Rotary Club of Collingwood SGB		X	
Rotary Club of Englehart		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 Wellington		X	X
Rotary Club of Whistler		X	

(Overview of Rotary club donors and team members)

Summary of 2025 Accomplishments

- 644 bicycles built, repaired and distributed over 7 distribution sites
- Installed 81 new single-family latrines in Siem Reap Province
- Drilled and installed 3 new wells at schools and community centers
- Built 2 new school latrines, wash areas and water storage tanks
- Built a new school playground and roof for wash area
- 3 tons of food distributed at Peoples Improvement Organization (Phnom Penh) and Orphanage (Kampong Speu)
- Provided 14, twenty liter 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 (\$400.00 US dollars)
- Provided 644 new toothbrushes and toothpaste to 7 schools

RWFL Bicycle Distribution

The team conducted distributions in 6 different provinces (Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Siem Reap, Ratanakiri, Kratie, and Kep) and covered more than 2000 km which equated to 36 hours of riding the bus. We had 7 bicycle builds with the 2 distribution sites receiving 82 bicycles, 1 receiving 72 bicycles, and the remaining 4 each receiving 102 bicycles.

The bicycles are purchased in Phnom Penh for \$39.00 US, and then transported to the actual distribution site via a local contractor. As the bicycles are gently used, we have a team of “bicycle mechanics” who conduct the repairs and verify the serviceability of the bicycle.

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.

Total cost for a bike in 2024: \$39.00 + \$2.00 (shipping fee), + \$1.15 (spares per bike cost) = \$42.15 **(\$57.74 Canadian)**

This year (2025) \$39.00 + \$2.87 (shipping fee) + \$2.34 (spares per bike cost) = \$44.21 **(\$62.94 Canadian)**

By comparison, a new bike of similar construction to the ones we distribute costs \$145.00 US (3.3 bikes per new one purchased)



(Red stars indicate distribution hubs, blue stars indicate bicycle distribution locations, purple stars represent project locations 2025)



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



(RWFL Team 2025 building and repairing the bicycles in advance of the distribution process)



(Distribution ceremony, top, the children waiting patiently, bottom left, and the dental demonstration, right)



(Just a few of the 644 happy faces after receiving their bicycles)

Projects 2025

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 project centers around supporting the children who are most vulnerable – those living in extreme poverty and/or within orphanages. According to the NGO *Friends International*, there are an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 street children in Cambodia, with Phnom Penh, the capital city, having the largest concentration.

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of street children in Cambodia. Primary among these is poverty, a leading cause of homelessness and street life among children. Many impoverished families are unable to provide for their children, forcing them to fend for themselves on the streets or in the city dump.

RWFL have been working with 2 organizations to help reduce the number of vulnerable children in Cambodia. First, the Peoples Improvement Organization (PIO). We have been working with PIO for many years – their mandate is to provide schooling, healthcare, dental, and clothing to children who would otherwise have to work to support their families. By providing rice to the children's families, PIO gets a promise by the parents to allow the children to come to school, instead of working within the city dump, or selling wares on the streets.

The second organization is called the Hopeful Association of the Poor (HAP), which currently has 65 children of all ages living at the orphanage in Phrey Chum Village, Udong District, Kampong Speu. Most children living at the orphanage have either lost their parents to HIV, or were living in such poor conditions, their parent(s) gave them up to the orphanage. This year, we provided 1.5 tons of food, along with school supplies and sports equipment to each of these organizations.



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



(Team members are PIO posing with some of the children)

81 Latrines for Families – Kok Veal, Trapeang Svay, Trapeang Reusei, Siem Reap Province

Sponsors: Robert and Mayari Pritzker Foundation, Rotary Club Englehart, Anne and Lionel Motl, David Slocum, Craig Hiscoe, Ryan Cey, Kim Strba, Ceder Coast, Northern Rock, Pat and Louise Bongers, Nigal Babins, Northland

This is the 4th year we have partnered with Sophanit Prin and local government officials within Siem Reap Province to build family latrines. 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 Reul Commune, Pouk District, Siem Reap Province. From November 2024 until March 2025, 81 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 75 latrines, and the recipients funded the extra 6.

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 \(unicef.org\)](#))



(Local contractors assembling some of the 81 latrines in Siem Reap Province)



(Just a few of the fortunate Cambodians standing beside their new latrines)

Water Filters for Schools

Sponsor: *Rotary Club Englehart*

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](https://www.water.org), approximately 72 percent of all Cambodians living in rural areas have limited access to safe drinking water. This holds true in all the schools we interact with, although they may have a well, the water often 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 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](https://www.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 - Sangkhev and Yuthitov Primary Schools, Battambang Province

Sponsors: Robert and Mayari Pritzker Foundation, Chicago USA and Rotary Clubs of Collingwood South Georgian Bay and Gravenhurst

The intent of these two projects was to build new latrines, wash areas and water storage tanks at two remote schools within Battambang Province. The latrines are 2 stall, squat type toilets with a cistern inside each stall to enable flushing. The wash areas are located at the back of the latrines and are multi-tap. Both the latrines and wash areas are now fed through the new water storage tank, which ensures adequate water supply during the dry season.



(Construction at Sangkhev Primary School, Battambang)



(Completed latrines, wash area and water storage tank at Sangkhev Primary School, Battambang)



(Construction at Yuthitov Primary School, Battambang)



(Completed latrines, wash area and water storage tank at Yuthitov Primary School, Battambang)

New Playground and Roof for Wash Area – Andong Rovieng Primary School, Kampong Chhnang

Sponsor: *Rotary Clubs of Kirkland Lake, On and Whistler Millennium, BC*

This project saw the building of a new playground along with the replacement of a roof over the wash area. 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 that 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 double 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.



(Top, construction of the playground, and bottom, finished product)



(Left, shows the old roof over the wash area, and right, the completed roof)

Installation of 3 Wells – Bou Chum and Kroperseasep Public School (Battambang), and Dang Het Public School Kratie Province

Sponsor: Rotary Clubs of Banff, Gravenhurst, Kirkland Lake and Wellington

The installation of wells within the rural Public Schools enables year-round access to water, reduces the workload on the children (who otherwise must transport the water from the local ponds in buckets), and provides for a good source of drinking water (with basic water filter systems).

The wells are dug down to approximately 150 feet, which ensures year-round access to water. An electric pump is installed so that water can be pumped to the latrines, wash areas and storage tanks.



(Top, drilling one of the wells, top right, ceremony with monks to wish good fortune on the donors, and bottom shows the 3 wells)

School Supplies and Sports Equipment – All 7 Schools, Peoples Improvement Organization and HAP Orphanage.

Sponsor School Supplies: *Rotary Club of Gananoque, Rob and Shelley McDonald, Rob, DenElzen, Colin Bendel, Dave Thompson, Zachary Posgate Wong, Nola Keller, and Erin Pinto*

Our school supplies project grew again this year, enabling us to provide supplies to 7 schools, the Peoples Improvement Organization (PIO) and the HAP Orphanage. Again, we solicited the input from local teachers on their needs within the classroom – both for the students and for the teachers. With the 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 9 equal batches for the primary schools, PIO and HAP. 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.



(Team members and teachers with the school supplies and sports equipment – showing 3 of 9 distributions)

Making Connections – 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 became connected with the Rotaract Club of Siem Reap as many of the Rotaract club's members attend Pannasastra University of Cambodia, where long time RWFL team member Elizabeth Jeroy is a teacher. After learning about Rotaract's **Project B - Bicycles for Education**, Elizabeth recognized its alignment with RWFL's mission and encouraged a collaboration between the two organizations.

As a result, 7 Rotaractors joined us over 2 bicycle distributions, gaining firsthand experience in the process. They proved to be skilled bike mechanics and as bilingual students they helped facilitate smooth communication during the ceremonies by translating instructions for the children.

Moving forward, RWFL is committed to strengthening its partnership with the Rotaract Club of Siem Reap. We have already committed to sponsoring a WASH project in 2026, working together at a bicycle distribution, and holding our first bicycle repair day at a local school in Siem Reap Province.



(It was amazing to be able to work alongside the future leaders of Cambodia – each one of the Rotaractors is taking a strong leadership role in helping the less advantaged rural Cambodians. RWFL looks forward to support many future endeavors with them)

RWFL 2025-2026 Projects

RWFL plans to implement the following projects beginning in October 2025. This coincides with the start of the new school year in Cambodia and will enable our RWFL Team 2026 to visit the sites for the official openings in January-February 2026.

RWFL Projects 2025-2026

Project	Location	US Funds	CDN Funds
Install 50 family latrines in 2 communes (\$140.00 US per latrine)	Siem Reap	\$7,000.00	\$9,590.00
Provide 20 L water filters to 7 schools during RWFL 2025	All 7 schools	\$900.00	\$1,233.00
Purchase 3 tons of rice, cooking oil, dried fish and noodles for orphanages	HAP Orphanage, PIO	\$2,200.00	\$3,025.00
Provide school supplies (for students and teachers) to 7 schools during RWFL 2025	All 7 schools	\$2,200.00	\$3,025.00
Provide sports equipment to 7 schools during RWFL 2025	All 7 schools	\$500.00	\$685.00
Washroom upgrade project – renovate 4 latrines at HAP Orphanage	Kampong Chhnang	\$7,535.00	\$10,500.00
New Latrine (4 stall) and garbage incinerator – Krabei Riel Secondary School	Siem Reap	\$5,780.00	\$7,918.00
Biosand Water Filtration System and garbage incinerator - Kien Sangke Secondary School	Siem Reap	\$4,200.00	\$5,760.00
Bicycle Repair Project – conduct repairs on children’s bicycles in support of ROTARACT Initiative (purchase of spare parts)	Siem Reap	\$1,000.00	\$1,370.00
		\$31,315.00	\$43,106.00

RWFL Team 2026 Bicycle Distribution: 24 January – 15 February 2026

Our plan this coming year will be to distribute 674 bicycles within five provinces.

Distribution	# Bicycles	Province
1	82	Kampong Chhnang
2	102	Battambang
3	102	Battambang
4	102	Siem Reap
5	102	Siem Reap
6	82	Kratie
7	102	Kep/Kampot
All distributions		674
US Dollars		\$26,286.00
Canadian Dollars		\$37,080.00

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.

Unite for Good!

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