



THE SAVONG FOUNDATION CAMBODIA ANNUAL REPORT 2021



LETTER FROM THE CEO



We strive to find financially underprivileged students with big dreams who are motivated to pursue professional careers.

Phil Caldwell CEO

The Savong Foundation Cambodia is now in its tenth year. It's a little difficult to believe if only because Cambodia can seem so far away at times. As I was planning a trip to the Kingdom of Wonder with a fellow board member, he mused over the 32 hours it would take to get there and asked, "Why couldn't you have started a nonprofit in Hawaii?"



When I first travelled to Cambodia in 2008, the thought of starting a nonprofit was probably the furthest thing from my mind. I had decided to take a sabbatical from work and I had always wanted to photograph the temples of Siem Reap. My brother provided me with some airmiles, I did my research on where to go while I was there and my flight was booked. It seemed easy enough but then the problems started; my passport renewal was taking longer than expected, the flight was unexpectedly cancelled due to using airmiles and everyone I talked to didn't seem to care that I had a very narrow window of travel before my job started up again. In the middle of my frustration, my mother asked calmly if this was a sign that I wasn't meant to go to Cambodia. I answered that this was just a way of testing me to see how badly I wanted to go to Cambodia. And I really wanted to go! Looking back, I really think that I was meant to take that trip. The country was calling to me like a Siren and I took the call (somehow ignoring the fact that sailors who answered Siren calls normally crashed and died on the rocks). A week after I put my feet on its ground, I was already thinking about how I could come back, start a nonprofit and help.

Help was such a vague uncertain term back then. I knew that I had skills to share but not certain if they would be useful. Coming off a sabbatical, I didn't have a lot of money and I absolutely hated asking people (especially friends and family) for donations. Where was the money for a nonprofit going to come from? But help starts with caring and I did care a lot so I figured I had a starting point. The next thing I asked myself was just how long was I going to do this for? I'm not the type of person who starts a project and then gives it up a year later. Case in point, I had just tried for ten years to break into Hollywood as a screenwriter so my resiliency and determination can be quite high but a nonprofit to help people is of course a completely different type of project. I definitely couldn't start something and give it up after a year or so, no matter how difficult it was. I was dealing with people's lives. It had to be a long-term commitment and I had to promise myself that at the very beginning.

Ten years after becoming a 501c3 nonprofit, I'm very proud to say that we are still going strong. With the passage of that much time, we are finally seeing the fruits of our labor. Scholarship students who started with us in Grade 5 are now in university. Students that started with us in high school have now graduated from university and are now in the workforce. A few of our students that I knew as "kids" have now grown up and have families of their own. One of our students, Boramy, is now doing post-graduate study in Singapore. Every student has a story and maybe one day, I'll write a book about them. In the meantime, please read about Cheat's story later in the report. Even at a young age in the countryside, he believed in the power of education to transform lives and he sought our support to get a scholarship. He approached one of the donors of the NGO and eventually, we supported him as well as four of his friends from the village where he had lived. Now he is a graduate from the University of Cambodia with a degree in Business Marketing and his transformation has been truly incredible.





Of course, there have been hurdles and the obvious one recently has been the COVID pandemic. Looking on the bright side (and certainly not to diminish the seriousness of the virus), the pandemic came at a good time when technology could be utilized to mitigate the challenges of getting an education while practicing social distancing. Our students transitioned to online classes and we provided them with smart phones if needed and a monthly stipend to pay for internet if they didn't have free access. The virus has also upended my travel plans (since I normally make the trip annually) but Telegram, Messenger and Zoom have all been my friends to keep in touch not only with my manager, Rathana, but also with the students. I can remember ten years ago when I tried to have phone calls to Cambodia on Skype and it was an exercise in frustration. Poor connections and dropped calls were the norm. Even board meetings were challenging back then due to "technical difficulties". There is no substitute for showing up in person, however, and I'm optimistic that I can take the trip this year to make sure our projects are running well and catch up with our Cambodian family.

Even though I came up with the initial concept of the Savong Foundation Cambodia, I was mindful of the African saying that reminds us "It takes a village to raise a child." That is especially true for our nonprofit. There is an extended group of people who make the magic happen and I'm very thankful for their help, guidance and donations. We have four other board members in the United States who bring a different skillset to our organization as well as a Rathana who runs all of our operations on site. Over the years, I have relied on volunteers from all over the world to give me insights on nonprofit work in general and when needed, our individual students specifically. The Savong Foundation Cambodia also falls under the umbrella of a larger NGO and I have worked with the other branches to make sure our students are well supported, especially if they are coming from the countryside and need a place to live. I'm especially grateful to our donors who quite literally keep this organization going. Most of our income comes from private donations and some of our donors have been with us for years. With so many ways to donate money these days, this is quite an honor and we work very hard to respect every dollar, whether it comes in the form of a twenty or a thousand. We truly believe in transparency and we have the Guidestar Platinum Seal of Approval to prove it.

Our corporate donor, iHerb has also been a huge part of our success. They have supported many of our students through sponsorships but I'm also thankful for the guidance and wisdom from Nika who looks after the charitable arm of their corporation. She knows first-hand the challenges that come along with any work in Cambodia and I have appreciated all the advice she has given me. I look forward to continued collaboration in the future.



It will be interesting to see what 2022 will bring. We have three young women, recently graduated from High School, who are interested in medical school. There is an entrance exam in March which they must pass to in order to choose which school they would like to attend. We will have another student graduating from the University of Cambodia with a degree in Marketing. We have two students who are going to enter the University of South-East Asia, one will study History and the other will be study Hospitality and Tourism. Most of our students are back in their classrooms and from the photos and videos I've seen of Siem Reap, it looks like the whole place got a makeover which will hopefully bring the tourist dollars back – since tourism is the driving force for employment in the Siem Reap area.

Beyond the hard work of our students, the generosity of our donors, the guidance from our board members and other supporters, I think the other big reason why we've made it to ten years is by learning to keep everything simple. We support a small number of students, we know them individually, we find the best schools and we cover tuition and in some cases, living expenses. We have one manager so our overhead is quite low and we carefully base our number of students on how much money we bring in. We pick the best students who want to pursue professional careers who need our financial help and we treat them like family which they are. Gone are the days when we tried to build water pumps, run a student dormitory, buy mosquito nets, support students who were terrible at school and who took a lot of energy to make them better. Simplicity is the key that has worked for us. With this principle in mind and the people who have surrounded us, I hope we're around to have another anniversary ten years from now.

Stay safe everyone.
Akun!
Dr. Phil Caldwell

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide young underprivileged Cambodians with academic and music scholarships.



We believe in giving our students the best quality education that we can find.



We match donors to students and we encourage them to communicate via email letters or videos--although we discourage direct communication.



We are not a "charity"; we provide our students with opportunities but we expect them to work hard for themselves and their families in return.

We have two main areas of support:

OUR PROJECTS

Scholarships Program

We provide tuition at the Future Bright International High School and the IQ International School in Siem Reap and at top universities in Siem Reap as well as Phnom Penh. Depending on the need, we provide school supplies, including laptop computers and transportation which is usually a bicycle. We track student grades and attendance and have a scholarship and student managers in Cambodia to address any issues that arise.

Scholarship sponsorship starts at \$25/month and can go up to \$100/month or more. Any donation amount is of course, deeply appreciated.

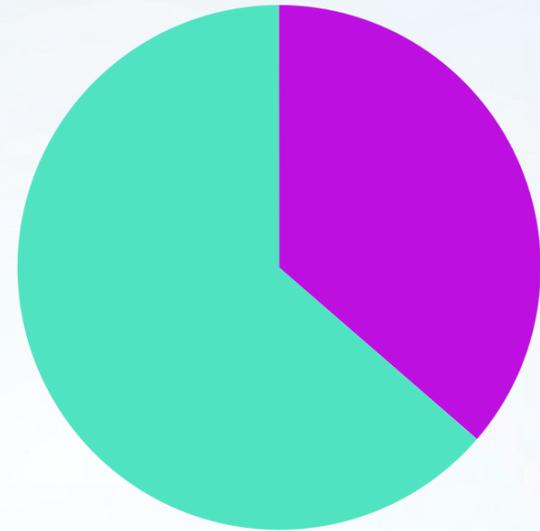
Music Program

We have partnered with the Nirmita Composers Institute which is dedicated to teaching and nurturing the next generation of Cambodian composers in both the Khmer traditional and Western art music genres. NCI also encourages the cultural exchange among nations in the region and within the global community.

2021: A YEAR IN NUMBERS

22

Scholarships renewed at the start of 2021/22 school year



Young Men Scholarships (36.36%)
Young Women Scholarships (63.64%)

11

Students in Grades K to 12



11

Students in University



2021 Graduates from University



Total Contributions
\$43,216

from

UNITED KINGDOM



Canada



Australia



USA



Over 96% of your donations went directly towards supporting our education and community programs!

OUR MUSIC PROGRAM

Growing out of the work from the 2020 summer workshops, the Nirmita Composers Institute, in partnership with the Savong Foundation Cambodia, is currently offering a unique opportunity to emerging Cambodian musician-composers.



Through the funding of a series of micro-commissions, we are seeking to help emerging artists pursue increased mentorship and to study with a group of distinguished faculty, led by Dr. Chinary Ung, Dr. Sean Heim, Dr. Koji Nakano and Susan Ung. These micro-commissions support traditional Cambodian musician-composers in composing new pieces and engaging in new collaborations.

This year, as the pandemic persisted, we were unable to return to the SE Asia region for our usual Nirmita Composers Workshops. So, to make a timelier contribution to Cambodian Culture and support important musical traditions, we redirected a portion of our generous funding toward a recording project of Mohori songs and the training of several young singers in that tradition.



The project, spearheaded by Ms. Chanthou Kem, one of the leading experts and performers of the Mohori song tradition, recorded ten works along with a total of nineteen musicians. The songs have now been entirely completed and will be released soon on various platforms in the coming months. Ms. Kem and her colleagues plan to record a second set of ten songs in the near future.

Nirmita is also continuing its ongoing micro-commission project that provides awards to Cambodian traditional musicians who compose new works for their instrument and/or traditional ensembles. The creation of new works for traditional genres is one of the principle goals of the Nirmita Composers Workshop.



Plans to return to the region for in-person workshops are in the beginning stages as we wait to see how things continue to develop with the Covid-19 pandemic and assess our ability to travel and conduct sessions safely and in accordance with the rules and regulations of national governments.

Please help us support this wonderful program. Donations can either be made through

<https://www.mightycause.com/organization/Savongfoundation>

Or

<https://www.paypal.com/fundraiser/charity/46695>

And please specify that you would like to contribute to the Music Program.



MEET OUR STUDENT: BORAMY

Greetings! My name is Boramy, currently a master's student in International Affairs at the National University of Singapore (NUS). I cannot state enough how grateful I am for all the support provided by Savong Foundation. Savong Foundation has supported my education for so many years from high school (Future Bright International School-FBIS) until I graduated from university (American University of Phnom Penh) in 2020.



I first got to know the foundation thanks to the director and English teachers at FBIS. At the time, I was already studying there and was planning to leave the school since my family could no longer support the tuition due to financial difficulties; and that was when I was introduced to Savong Foundation and was granted the scholarship by the foundation to continue my education there. Without this fortunate encounter, I would not have been where I am today.

Looking back, my life and career prospect would be completely different had I not received support from the NGO. I would say all the support from the foundation and donors has shaped me as a person and what I value in life, which is education. This has inspired my passion and interest in the non-profit sector and in helping other children in hopes that they all can receive the good quality education they deserve and that no one is left behind. My last message to Savong Foundation and all the donors, especially Phil, is that I am very grateful and appreciative of all the support and everything you have given to Cambodian children; and I hope that Savong Foundation can continue to grow and contribute this good cause, by supporting many more underprivileged children in Cambodia to pursue good quality education and make a difference in their lives.

MEET OUR STUDENT: CHEAT

When I was in grade 8 of secondary school, I really wanted to improve my English and I liked to talk with foreigners. When I first met Duncan via Facebook we were just normal friends then I chatted with him, just wanted to know where he comes from then we talked about our own countrylike 2-3 times per month.

When I had internet I always ask how he was doing Until one day my family got some problems. My parents almost want me to stop studying and move from our homeland. I shared my story with Duncan and he found solutions for me as I said I don't want to stop studying. Duncan told me about Savong organization and then told me to contact Savong.



After that Savong came to my village to visit me to see what was going on with me. He talked with my parents about solutions and told my parents about a place for children to study. He brought me to the SOC living facility on April 2013. Duncan posted about my story on his personal website and then he found a sponsor for me (Nicholas Stone) who was interested in supporting me. I moved from the SOC facility in grade 10 to Siem Reap so I could study at the Future Bright International School (FBIS). I graduated from FBIS in 2016 and moved to Phnom Penh to continue my Bachelor degree in Marketing. I graduated with my Bachelor degree from the University of Cambodia at the end of 2020 with the final graduation celebration in 2021 December.

When I was at university I studied and worked at the same time in a distribution company (kitchen products). I've just stopped working there and started up my own small business (kitchen supplies online business).

Thank you so much to all the sponsors for the scholarship. Without all of you I might be a worker or farmer at my homeland. What I have become today is part of all of your help

Thank you so much especially
Dr. Phil.

OUR WISH LIST

Since we are a grassroots non profit, we rely on even the smallest donations to make our programs successful. However, even small non profits can dare to dream and we hope to turn these dreams into reality for the upcoming year. Can you help?



High School Scholarships in Siem Reap

Cost: \$25 to \$100/month

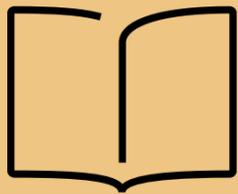
We are always looking for funds to cover tuitions for new students. We handpick our students based on academic ability as well as financial need and we send them to the private schools.



University Scholarships in Phnom Penh

Cost: \$50 to \$200/month

We would love to have all our students study in Phnom Penh to pursue advanced degrees. It is simply not possible for our students to pursue many professional careers if they stay in Siem Reap.



School Supplies for High School Students

Cost: \$100/year

At the start of the school year, I usually travel to Cambodia to purchase school supplies. These may include school books, notebooks, pens, backpacks and uniforms.



Laptop computers for University Students

Cost: \$250 to \$400/computer

We provide laptop computers to our university students if they don't already have one. We prefer to purchase locally to support the local businesses in the Siem Reap or Phnom Penh community.



Music Project

Cost: Any donation will help!

The Nirmita Composers Institute organizes workshops to instruct and nurture the next generation of composers in Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia. The donations will go directly towards funding these workshops and their students.

OUR BIG THANKS

Ten years ago, we were excited about getting a \$20 donation and we still are! It's true that we make every donation go as far as possible but it costs a lot of money to provide full scholarships to the best schools and employ the people to make all this happen. We are so thankful for the ongoing support that we have received and we look forward to your support for years to come.



Individual donors

Through our scholarship program, we pair up a student with a donor (or donors). These donors give us a yearly lump sum or donate every month. The students communicate to their donors (via the Savong Foundation Cambodia) every three months through letters or videos. .

We are always looking for supporters who would love to help our students and since the Savong Foundation Cambodia is a 501(c)(3), your contributions are tax deductible in the United States.



Corporate donor

iHerb[®]

We are very thankful to iHerb.com for their continued generosity. They have been a huge sponsor for our students and we are honored to be in partnership with them.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US



Siem Reap, Cambodia



phil@savongfoundation.org



www.facebook.com/savongfoundation



[@savongfoundn](https://twitter.com/savongfoundn)

OUR FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM



NONE OF US, INCLUDING ME, EVER DO
GREAT THINGS. BUT WE CAN ALL DO
SMALL THINGS, WITH GREAT LOVE, AND
TOGETHER WE CAN DO SOMETHING
WONDERFUL – MOTHER TERESA

