

# STUDENT SPONSORSHIP UPDATE

for 2013-2014



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## A Note from Friendship with Cambodia's Office Manager

Please find enclosed a photo of the student you are sponsoring. It is a joy for me to work with our Sponsorship Program and see the eagerness of the students to stay in school, graduate from high school, and go on to university. I was particularly interested in how students adjusted to college, coming from rural backgrounds. I interviewed Cheam Kosal, our Country Director, to learn more about this process. I hope you enjoy reading about our students' university experiences!

Many thanks for your support, Erin McSpadden

## Going to College

Most of our sponsors who receive their student's first university report after transitioning from high school often see that students have a difficult adjustment during their freshman year.

Students usually mention feeling homesick and overwhelmed by the traffic. While this is most likely true for any student starting university anywhere, it is an especially difficult time for our sponsored students, as they move from very poor, rural areas to an urban environment. Not only are they unused to crowded spaces, they are unaccustomed to the high price of food and air pollution.

Cheam Kosal, Friendship with Cambodia's Country Director in Cambodia, and our other local staff offer several programs, in addition to individual counseling, to make the transition from rural high schools to urban universities a little easier for each student.

When our students who wish to attend university are in the twelfth grade, they travel to Phnom Penh for an orientation. Chan Sitha, FWC's Program Officer, picks them up at the bus stop and takes them to the FWC office to meet with current university students. The older students offer advice about choosing a major and university. FWC staff and university students give the high school students a tour of universities in Phnom Penh.

In addition to these orientation sessions and tours, FWC continues to help students adjust throughout their university careers. Kosal organizes monthly meetings where students share information about their volunteer work, workshop opportunities, and any other useful news.

The students also have weekly Study Circles. Kosal explains, "The Study Circle meeting is set up for students to learn from each other." At each meeting, a few students present a topic to the group. Topics range from deforestation and protecting natural resources to the high student dropout rate in Cambodia.

At the first Study Circle in March this year, Tham Sao Run and Nuon Siev Mey led a discussion about the causes and prevention of traffic accidents. Students also discuss the issues and challenges that they face in school.

Kosal notes that students who participate often in the Study Circles tend to become braver at speaking in front of the larger group. These meetings encourage students to practice public speaking skills and to contribute in group settings. Developing a comfort with such situations helps our students in job settings.

The Study Circles also help students become more aware of social issues in Cambodia. As many of them are interested in working with NGOs, these meetings provide useful information.

According to Kosal, one of the biggest challenges FWC's students face in obtaining employment after college, especially with NGOs, is a lack of English skills. With much of Cambodia's aid work funded and/or monitored from outside the country, English is an important asset.

Each Study Circle concludes with an English lesson from Sitha, which helps students practice speaking English. Students also take one year of English at university.

Out of FWC's 28 university graduates to date, 27 have jobs. We're proud of them for succeeding as a result of their hard work.



**FWC students share a tuk-tuk ride while visiting universities in Phnom Penh.**

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