Empowering with an education to prevent sex trafficking
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Dear friends and supporters,

Free To Shine turned 4 this year and saw us enrol our 200th girl onto our scholarship program. The impact our program has had on our girls and their families has surpassed even our own expectations. What has been big for me this year is the realisation that I am so very proud of Free To Shine, not just of what we do, but how we do it and the energy on which the organisation is built.

We have a passionate team of skilled volunteers in Australia who work on whatever needs doing next to ensure we build the best organisation for our team in Cambodia to be able to reach more girls. And in Cambodia we have a remarkable team of exceptionally competent Education Outreach Officers who support and guide our girls and their families in a very gentle and friendly, yet firm and honest way. The year has been filled with examples of human beings at their best:

Mr Sophean, who set up a school and by the time he had 150 children enrolled realised that 8 of them had mums who were sex workers, and called us in to see if we could enrol these girls onto our program and help keep them safe.

Mr Hong, the friendly neighbour, who for 2 months went out every Thursday morning on the bike with our team to introduce us to families in his village he knew were doing it tough and perhaps met our criteria. There was no payment in it for him, just the desire to link the people he knew needed it most to a new opportunity.

Sampor’s mum who has become somewhat of a central figure in her village, and one day had 8 more families ready for us to assess. And as they came one by one she stated firmly to each young girl we were considering enrolling, “if you get accepted on this program, you study hard and I mean hard, because it’s not just you, it’s my name attached to this because I brought you to Free To Shine so you make sure you focus on your studies, don’t you make me look bad.”

Mr Hoth, the village leader who each time we arrive in his village has another map sketched out for us to find the next girl he thinks should probably be on our program.
I had been warned not to trust village leaders, that they’ll just send us to their nieces and their family members, but what I hope these stories convey is that there are good people in every village we work in, ready to step in, roll up their sleeves and help, not because they get anything for themselves, but because they understand what we do and they want to help us reach those families that need us most.

Mothers sit with us and tell us that in addition to their own children they have also been left with a niece to be cared for. They have gone above and beyond in taking in and looking after their niece. They will feed her and keep her safe, but can’t afford her school materials. We sit down with her and do an Initial Assessment. Then we work together as a team, the mother and her children providing a safe family for her to now live in, while we cover the expense of school. We simply don’t encounter a ‘hand out’ attitude. Time and again, it’s a ‘please partner with us so we can keep her in school’ attitude.

I am so proud of Romlek, who had dropped out of school when we found her a little over a year ago, and is now in school, attending English classes, a leader of other girls in her village and works really hard in the heat of the sun every afternoon dripping wet through, doing manual labour, all with a big smile, to continue helping her grandma.

I am so proud of Chenda* and her mum who are such a determined duo. The difference in this family in a year makes me tear up. Never have I met such a quietly strong pair. The support, guidance and materials we have provided them with seems minuscule in comparison to what they’ve turned it into.
*Name has been changed to protect her identity

I am so pleased to see Rery enjoying school, her and her grandma are thriving. A place on our program has turned their world around. Grandma is so much healthier and vibrant, and Rery always had hope, but now it is matched with excitement and action. I cannot express just how much that little girl loves learning to read! And it gives me goosebumps to see Rery joined by her older sister, now safely back from working in Thailand, and also with the opportunity to begin school.

Children get trafficked into the commercial sex industry from these rural villages, it’s why we work there. But it is not from a lack of caring. The condition in which these families attempt to survive and raise children is impossible to comprehend. While you sit safely in a heated home, with water that runs right out of the tap, have electricity at the flick of a switch, food in your fridge and children who get to go to school, it is impossible to fathom the desperation these families encounter. Yet these villages are not devoid of morals. These villages are filled with strong women - strong women doing everything they can think of to hold their families together.

It is an honour and a privilege to partner with these families to get and keep their daughters in school, so that they, equipped with an education, will have an easier life. No longer forced to focus on survival they’ll be able to turn their attentions to leading their communities, and even their country.

Nicky Mih

Nicky Mih
CEO Free To Shine
We believe children should be in schools, not brothels.

So we empower with an education to prevent sex trafficking.
We take very seriously the responsibility that you entrust in us when you invest your time and resources in our organisation, and we are excited to share with you the impact of your support in this annual report.

We are a registered Australian charity, founded on June 01, 2010 and endorsed by the ATO. Our ACN is 143 986 074. We are governed by a board of directors and we adhere to high standards of accountability and transparency. All our financials are independently audited by a Registered Company Auditor.

Free To Shine is run by a skilled team of volunteers in Australia led by our CEO, a position that is currently a part time paid position. We currently employ 4 highly competent Cambodian Education Outreach Officers.

Accountability & Transparency
We identify girls at high risk of being targeted by traffickers, get her a uniform and a bike, fill a bag with books and pens, and visit her regularly to keep her in school and keep her safe.
Free To Shine believe children should be in schools, not brothels. So we identify girls at high risk of being targeted by traffickers, get her a uniform and a bike, fill a bag with books and pens, and visit her regularly to keep her in school and keep her safe. We are a humanitarian organisation founded in Australia who work in collaboration with communities and local governments in Cambodia so that girls can reach their full potential and contribute to their community and the world. We equip with an education to prevent sex trafficking.

We work with:
- girls who have never been to school
- girls who have dropped out or are on the brink of dropping out
- girls left to live independently, caring for younger siblings
- girls living with grandparents or aunts with little ability to keep them in school
- girls who work to financially support their families
- girls living with family violence
Our goal is to have 1000 girls enrolled on our program by June 2016

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” - Ben Franklin


We do not want any girl to experience the horrors and tortures of sex trafficking. We focus on preventing girls ever experiencing this trauma.

It is certainly important to have organisations collaborating with the police on rescue operations, aftercare centres for survivors, and legal teams working in the justice system to bring about prosecutions. However survivors report that when girls are rescued from brothels, the traffickers simply go out into the villages and take a new young girl. These girls need to be protected. Survivors believe that if these young girls were in school they would not be trafficked. The International Labour Organisation agrees, “getting girls into schools and keeping them there is vital to reducing their vulnerability to trafficking.” The strength of our approach is its directness: we go to the villages where girls are in danger, put them in school and support and guide them. The longer a girl stays in school, the more valued she becomes by her family and in her own eyes - and the less vulnerable she is to being trafficked.

UNESCO report that there are currently 25,697 girls in Cambodia who should be in primary school but are not, and a further 119,972 girls who should be in grades 7-9 but are not.

Why We Focus On Prevention
We have kept 200 girls safe from being trafficked.
Our Program

Through our scholarship program, we have kept 200 girls in Cambodia safe from being trafficked.

This time last year we had enrolled 89 girls onto our program. We have more than doubled that figure this year.

Our goal is to have 1000 girls enrolled on our program by June 2016.

Going Rural

Free To Shine identity villages that are at high risk of being targeted by sex traffickers. We have 4 Cambodian Education Outreach Officers who meet with village leaders, commune leaders, police chiefs and school directors in some of Cambodia’s most remote and struggling villages.

We are very blessed to have four wonderful Education Outreach Officers who work so well together as a team and espouse the Free To Shine values. They are passionate about their work and are dedicated to the families and girls on our program. They care deeply about the importance of empowering through education and they understand the challenges families face in keeping their daughters in school. They have a strong sense of justice and an enormous capacity for compassion, balanced with a great sense of humour and fun, they are an inspiration to us all.
Initial Assessments

We conduct an initial assessment of girls and their families. We specifically focus on identifying girls who have either never been to school, who have dropped out of school or who are on the brink of dropping out. Many families are living in such poverty that they cannot afford to eat, let alone pay the fees associated with schooling and many families have encountered a lot of violence.

The 2006 United Nations Secretary-General’s study on Violence against Children made a number of recommendations, including that policies and programs should address immediate risk factors, such as a lack of parent-child attachment, family breakdown and abuse of alcohol or drugs. It states that attention should be focused on policies that address poverty and gender inequality. That’s exactly what our program does.

Our girls’ parents commit to allowing their daughter to go to school everyday and promise to encourage her to read and study. Our girls themselves commit to working hard in class, practising their schoolwork at home and reading. We commit to visiting them regularly to provide ongoing support and encouragement.

Engaging Community Leaders

School directors and village leaders speak to the girls about the importance of utilising their new opportunity and encouraging them to take personal responsibility for their education. We’ve even had mothers stand up and encourage groups of girls to work hard, telling them how proud they are of them to gain a place on our program. We’ve also received ongoing support from the Monks at the local pagoda who are always happy to lend us their classroom or guide our girls.
Visiting Regularly

We visit the girls and their teachers at school to monitor their education. We also visit her at home to support the family and guide them through any factors that may impact on their learning.

We monitor our girls:
  • attendance
  • understanding of what they have been learning
  • and their academic performance

A key element of the success of our program is that we establish a strong and trusting relationship with our girls and encouraging their commitment to their education. Our girls are genuinely eager and enthusiastic to demonstrate newly acquired skills and knowledge, whether it be learning 3 more letters of the alphabet or a formula in physics.

And we help guide our families through the problems they’re encountering such as:
  • medical problems and the associated loans they take to cover the costs
  • illegal migration into Thailand in search of employment
  • alcohol abuse and family violence

In the absence of Free To Shine, pure desperation saw families turn to traffickers to help them solve these problems.

Our Education Outreach Officers support and guide families to make sound decisions around money, loans and health care. When parents have to move away for work, we make sure that the girl and her siblings are with someone who can look after them. In situations of alcoholism and family violence, we teach girls strategies to stay safe.
Strengthening ties within the family

One year ago we enrolled a girl who was in a very difficult family situation. Placing her in an orphanage was discussed as a possible solution, but Free To Shine believes in strengthening ties within the family as a first option. If this fails, we seek options where she can stay in a family situation rather than moving her to an institution. Our concern in placing children in orphanages is that it disempowers the family and community by teaching them that they are unable to solve their own problems and they need someone else to fix it. Orphanages may also provide immediate solutions to the child in that she may no longer be experiencing neglect or abuse, but it creates long term problems in that when she leaves the orphanage she no longer has strong ties within her community, ties that would support her throughout her adult life.

As our first preference is to strengthen the ties within the family, we chose to focus on educating each family member and guiding them in making responsible choices for the benefit of the child. She is now thriving within her own family.

In cases where it is not safe for the child to stay in her family we seek to keep her in a family situation in her community.

This year one of our girls experienced the death of her mother. While her father is grieving the loss of his wife unable to care for his two children, we have worked with the community to ensure safe family situations have been provided to these two children, until such time that their father may be able to care for them. The community has rallied behind this girl and her brother and Free To Shine supports and encourages two aunts and a neighbour who have stepped up to support the children.

Free To Shine’s role is not to find a quick solution for our girls when they experience real challenges but to find solutions that are best for them long term, and situations where a strong support system is built within the family and community.
Library Books

Our girls were reading books quicker than we could provide them, so we set to work purchasing more so that now we can provide girls with as many books as they can read. Our library books are enjoyed by all family members, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents. These books have caught the attention of all members of the community, irrespective of their age or ability to read.

We have been met with levels of enthusiasm beyond our expectations. When we gave 10 year old Keeth her first library book we returned 2 weeks later to find she had copied the entire book, complete with pictures, into her school notebook. “I love my library book,” she said, “and I know I have to give it you back, and I want to swap it for another one, but I never want to lose the story.”
“The villages we work in are filled with strong women - strong women doing everything they can think of to hold their families together. It is an honour and a privilege to partner with these families to get and keep their daughters in school.” - Nicky Mih CEO
Clean Water

Many of our families get quite sick and sometimes this is through drinking unclean water. We taught the girls about unsafe drinking water and we talked about hand washing and good hygiene. Through donations from our Give For Good initiative we were able to purchase and provide water filters for 78 families.

We have provided access to clean water for more than 300 people
Learning Human Rights

None of our girls, their parents, the monks, nor the village leaders had ever heard of human rights. So on International Human Rights Day, we held a class at the pagoda. Our girls and their parents, and some young monks learnt about the different rights stated in the UN Declaration of Human Rights. They learned that everyone, everywhere from birth has the right to:

- enough food and clean water to survive and not be hungry
- shelter, a roof over their head to protect them from the weather
- a safe place to live free from abuse and neglect
- be free from slavery
- access education

This has opened the conversation for us to now talk about the ploys sex traffickers use and how to keep themselves and each other safe.

Painting Classes

The girls have enjoyed a couple of painting classes we’ve been able to provide. Some of the girls painted scenes of the Cambodian landscape, others of houses and flowers. No matter what they paint, the girls have found yet another opportunity to express themselves as individuals in a manner some of them had never experienced before. Allowing each of them to be themselves and find out what talents they hold is key to ensuring their success in the future.
Hygiene Class

One day while visiting ten girls, the EOO’s noticed that half the girls were very unclean. In response to this we held a hygiene class to teach the importance of good hygiene. They were taught:

- hand washing and keeping your nails clean
- brushing your teeth
- personal grooming eg, bathing so that you put a clean uniform on a clean body
- how to clean up and dispose of rubbish safely

Visiting Angkor Wat

Angkor Wat is a core part of the Cambodian culture and heritage, yet the majority of our girls have never had the opportunity to experience it, purely because they cannot afford the bus fare. This year we were able to organise transport for 19 of our girls to visit Angkor Wat and Ta Prohm. We hope we can extend this opportunity to even more girls next year.

Dress a Girl

Every girl on our program received a dress, courtesy of Dress A Girl Around the World who believe every girl, everywhere should have at least one pretty dress.
This time last year we had enrolled 89 girls onto our program. We have more than doubled that figure this year.
Evaluating our program

Cultivating a team of dedicated and knowledgeable Education Outreach Officers, and a cohesive team of skilled volunteers has been our priority. Since moving from operating solely in partnership with two other organisations, to recruiting and training our own Education Outreach Officers, we currently have:

- enrolled an additional 111 girls, in 11 villages we couldn’t reach before
- increased autonomy leading to greater efficiency and the ability to reach our high standards
Last year we met 8 year old Rery. She had never been to school. Her 10 year old sister had also never been to school though she was sent to Thailand to work.

When we met Rery she was living with her grandma on a small wooden bed wrapped in plastic. They always got wet when it rained.

This 8 year old told us she really wanted to go to school like other children. She sometimes borrowed a bicycle from a neighbor to cycle to the school to look at other children learning and hoping that one day, perhaps she too can sit inside the classroom!

We enrolled her on our program and she is loving school. During each visit she eagerly shows us which new letters she’s been learning.

Now that Rery is in school and she has a new home we built for her, her 11 year old sister has come back from Thailand. In the new school year Free To Shine will help Rery’s sister go to school for the first time.
Living Alone

When we found Chenda* she was 14 years old and living alone with her two younger brothers. They were living in a house full of holes where they were getting wet every night it rained.

Chenda’s mum is a strong woman, with a difficult background, who is 100% committed to her own children getting an education so that they will be able to create better lives for themselves. She is prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure her children go to school, even if that means leaving them behind and moving to the city to work, leaving her children to fend for themselves.

Mum used to visit them every month. She loved them. She cared for them. She did this only so they could go to school. 14 year old Chenda has inherited her mother’s tenacity. At 11 years old she knew she couldn’t get to school without a bike, so she left her younger brothers to go and work for a family. She earned $7.50 a month. As soon as she had the $40 she needed to buy her bike she quit her job and returned home to look after her brothers again. 3 years later the bike was broken and beyond repair. In order to move on to secondary school she needed a new bike.

We enrolled her on our program, got her a new bike, provided her uniforms and school supplies and this alleviated the pressure off Mum, who no longer needed to earn quite so much money. She now only had to fund school for 2 children. She therefore returned home and took slightly lower paid work, so that she can now be home to care for her children. Chenda and her brothers are very happy to have her home. The community recognised the tenacity and dedication of this family and the entire community rallied around to help build them a new house. We provided the building materials, Mum purchased additional materials, the construction workers volunteered their time for free and we provided them lunch.

The whole family are together, safe, dry and thriving.  

*Name has been changed to protect her identity.
Sampor’s Mum

Sampor’s Mum is a special kind of woman. She looks after her two teenage daughters on her own and has done for years since her husband left. She gets up at the crack of dawn to begin making noodles and works throughout the day. She barely makes enough to make ends meet, yet in addition to this she has an adopted daughter too because that little girl had no one to care for her.

And now, she also cares for one of our girls and her younger brother (since their Mum died). This Mum is working exceptionally hard to provide not only for her own 2 children, but for 3 more.

She tells us, “I can’t do much, but I do what I can. If a girl needs help, I should help.”
“This year has been filled with human beings at their best and the impact our program has had on our girls and their families has surpassed even our own expectations.”

- Nicky Mih, CEO Free To Shine
The Numbers

$$124,975$$
The amount raised this year

$$211,853$$
The total amount raised

18
The number of villages we work in

200
The number of girls we’ve enrolled

405
The number of library books being read

78
The number of water filters distributed

2
The number of houses built

Underlying these results is integrity and compassion for every girl on our program. It is our commitment to continue to build upon our success and reach an ever growing number of girls before the traffickers do, and work collaboratively with each girl and her family as she pursues her education and her human entitlement to be free to shine!
All of our funding comes from individuals, businesses and foundations who believe children should be in schools, not brothels.

With special thanks to those who contributed in excess of $3,000 each Australian Ethical, Be Free Yoga, Ines Scotland, Kevin Hitch, Thurra Roofing, Torah Bright and Freedom Summits
Statement of Activities
For the years ended 30 June 2014 and 2013

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<th>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</th>
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<th>2013</th>
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<td>Major Investors</td>
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<td>Fundraising Events &amp; Donations</td>
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<td>Girls Sponsorships</td>
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<td>Stationery</td>
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<td><strong>Total Operating Expenses</strong></td>
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| Revenue less Expenses | 58,976 | 30,668 |

| NET ASSETS AT END OF THE YEAR | $107,557 | $48,581 |
Our goal is to have 500 girls enrolled by June 2015
Where next?

We take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful people who have supported FREE TO SHINE this year, as a volunteer, as a donor, as one of our girls sponsors, as someone who ran for a reason or climbed for a cause, as someone who attended our events - the list is endless! THANK YOU - these efforts combined is what has enabled us to enrol 200 girls already.

It is our commitment to build upon our success further and to reach more girls before the traffickers do. Our goal is to have 500 girls safely enrolled by June 2015. We look forward to your participation.