QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

Our Quarterly Impact Report provides details and statistics of beneficiaries and their families for the quarter period.

OCTOBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31 2017

TOTAL NUMBERS

725 girls enrolled
50 village partnerships
16 houses built
107 community classes taught
564 water filters delivered
648 bikes delivered
INTRODUCTION

This quarterly impact report will provide an in depth look at our work with one girl, Soleak, and her family. We hope that this case study highlights our holistic approach to child protection, which involves working intensively with families to strengthen support systems in order to secure a safer, more prosperous future for our students.

Soleak is the eldest daughter of Borey and Daevy and was enrolled in our program at 12 years old. When we welcomed Soleak onto our program, we provided her with a backpack full of school supplies, school uniforms, a water filter for her family, tuition money for extra classes and a bicycle so that she could travel to school more easily. We then began to work more intensively with her family to see how else we could support them.

During our meetings with Soleak and her family, our team of Social Workers and Education Officers noted many areas for concern, including the father’s drinking, poor nutrition and hygiene, a lack of financial understanding coupled with substantial debts, and an unsafe house. There were also times when the parents did not have enough money to send their children to school. Despite these many challenges at home, Soleak was a motivated, hardworking student who told us she wanted to graduate high school and get a good job.
INTERVENTION

During our early visits, our Education Officers sat down with each family member for a private conversation. The father’s drinking was an overarching concern, affecting all family members and their financial situation. At the time, the father was drinking nearly all day and all night, and would regularly miss work. On top of this, he was spending a significant amount of the family’s money to fund his drinking habits, which caused them to default on their loan repayments. The family also shared that the father was having stomach problems as result of the heavy drinking.

Phanna, one of our Education Officers, began working with the father almost immediately after Soleak was enrolled. Phanna began to build a relationship with him, openly sharing similar experiences he had with family and friends and slowly gaining the father’s trust over the course of his many home visits. Phanna explained to him how his behavior and actions were affecting the rest of the family and kept encouraging him to accept our help and make a change. Phanna also provided him with resources and encouraged him to see a physician. Meanwhile, our other Education Officers were working with Soleak and her mother to ensure Soleak was attending school every day and that everyone was safe at home.

As expected, the progress was slow, but we noticed small improvements at each home visit. After two months, the father had stopped drinking during the day and his attendance at work drastically improved. After four months, he felt more in control and decided to stop drinking at home completely, thinking of how it affected his wife and children. Now, six months later, the father and family report that he only drinks on special occasions outside of the home, and has become much more productive and involved in the family’s day to day life.

We are so proud of how far the father has come, but remain cautiously optimistic and will continue to work with him and offer support and resources, including a referral to our Social Work Program if needed.
After the father’s drinking, the second most critical issue affecting Soleak and her siblings’ future was the family’s financial hardship. When we first started working with the family, Soleak’s mother told us that sometimes they didn’t have enough money to send their children to school.

The father had taken out several loans, some from neighbors and one from a microfinance company with a very high interest rate. They struggled to make the payments due to his spending on alcohol and frequent absences from work. The mother was unaware of the magnitude of their debts and was not involved with the family’s finances.

Our Education Officers taught both parents about the importance of saving over time and planning ahead for loan repayments. Phanna encouraged the mother to take a more active role in their financial planning and to think about her children and their future. Together they brainstormed ways for the mother to supplement the father’s income and came up with a plan: she began to purchase fruit from her neighbor to sell at their local market.

After months of working with Soleak’s parents, they were able to get on track with their loan repayments. With the mother working and the father spending less and less on alcohol, they’ve been able to save enough to build a new, safer home!
When we first started working with the family, another major concern was their living situation. They lived in a small house with only one room; everyone slept together on the ground. There was no toilet or running water. The house was made entirely of tin and had several holes in the siding and roof. Houses made of tin in Cambodia are not ideal due to drastic temperatures; they become extremely hot during the day and cold at night. During the rainy season, the roof leaked and the house flooded. The flooding was more extreme than in other areas as the house was situated on a lower part of the property. Once flooded, the standing water attracted mosquitos. Lastly, there was no trash collection around the house, so the yard was full of debris.

As the family’s financial situation improved and the father became more productive, he was able to focus on building a new, more secure home for his family. He used his skills in construction and made plans for a new house, situated behind their old one, on higher ground. Meanwhile, he continued to work to support the family, so the house was constructed little by little, with help from everyone. Now, the house is almost complete and the family is enjoying two bedrooms, a separate kitchen and a toilet. It is made of concrete, with tile shingles, iron work around the windows, and two doors that lock. The new house is beautiful, much safer for the family and they’re extremely proud to call it their own.
NUTRITION, HEALTH AND HYGIENE

The family told our Education Officers that Soleak had experienced health problems in the past, including frequent fatigue and fainting. They took her to a doctor who said she needed to improve her diet and eat more vegetables.

We worked with the entire family, covering the basics of diet, nutrition and hygiene. One of our officers worked with the father to construct a vegetable garden in their yard. We provided them with a wide variety of nutritious vegetable seeds, and some training and instructions on how to yield the best produce. The mother and kids quickly began growing vegetables, both for the family to eat and to sell at the local market. Soon, the family had a garden full of pumpkins, winter melons, morning glory, papaya, cucumber and chilies.

Before we enrolled Soleak on our program, the family was drinking unfiltered water, which made them susceptible to water borne illnesses. We provided them with a new water filter and instructions on how to use and clean it.

Soleak and her family have reported feeling much more energetic and thankfully have not had any health problems since.
Recently, the family was informed that Soleak’s birth certificate does not match her commune registration; her registration incorrectly states that she is three years younger than she actually is. Her parents were previously unaware of the error as they are not able to read or write. Without the matching registration and birth certificate, Soleak would not be able to sit for her grade 9 exam and move on to high school. The process to change one’s registration in Cambodia is lengthy, complicated and expensive; the change needs to be decided in court and confirmed with the school director, and the fee is close to $100. Free To Shine worked with the parents to navigate this complex legal process and correct the error, ensuring Soleak will not fall behind in school.
SOLEAK

Since we enrolled Soleak on our program we have witnessed major improvements not only in her family stability, but in her educational performance as well. She was recently awarded first in her class and received a certificate of achievement from her teacher.

She loves to read and is always eager to check out new books from our mobile library.

When we first met her, she didn’t want to stay at home or have friends over because she was embarrassed by her father’s drinking. Now, she is proud of her new home and invites friends over to study and practice English.

Her mother is now very supportive of Soleak’s education and encourages her to work hard and stay in school so that she can get a good job in the future.

Now Soleak has better nutrition and hygiene, more energy and consistent attendance in school. She’s healthier, happier, and has a brighter future!

“I am happy and I feel a lot of improvement through my education. In the future I want to be a policewoman.”
THANK YOU

Thank you to Soleak’s parents for accepting our help and full heartedly following our advice to improve Soleak and her sibling’s future.

Thank you to our dedicated staff of Education Officers and Social workers who are caring, optimistic, determined and work tirelessly to improve the lives of others.

And lastly, thank YOU for your continued support, interest and involvement. This case study is just one of the 623 families we are currently partnered with and your generous support makes it all possible.