



# QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

1 JULY TO 30 SEPT 2019

This Quarterly Impact Report focuses on our value of education and the steps Free To Shine takes to support the girls on our program to pursue a high school education. We will celebrate the story of Sina\*, who has overcome tremendous challenges to be the first in her family to graduate from high school.

Value of the quarter  
**EDUCATION**



**1,109**  
Safety visits



**198**  
Social work interventions



**71**  
Water filters provided



**1**  
Community library built



**58**  
Students passed grade 9\*



**26**  
Students passed grade 12\*

**THE NUMBERS THIS QUARTER**



Sina\*

## FOR GIRLS LIKE SINA\*, THE PROSPECT OF MAKING IT ALL THE WAY THROUGH SECONDARY AND HIGH SCHOOL AND PASSING THE GRADE TWELVE EXAM CAN OFTEN FEEL LIKE MORE OF A DREAM THAN A REALITY.

The high costs of school materials and additional curriculum classes, coupled with many families' reliance on their children to help out at home or earn money for the family, means that many girls discontinue school to work or help their families.<sup>1</sup>

Sina has parents who value her education and have encouraged her to pursue her goal of obtaining a high school diploma. But traditional gender norms in Cambodia around care work, early marriage, and the perceived value of girls' education means that many of her female classmates discontinued their education before they could reach grade twelve<sup>2</sup>.

While the Cambodian government provides free public education up to grade nine, Free To Shine supports all of the girls on our program to complete secondary and high school through grade twelve, and also offers opportunities for higher education. In Cambodia, the transition between primary and secondary school is critical, as many students discontinue their education after primary school. According to a 2017 Ministry of Planning Socio-Economic survey, while 77% of 15 to 24-year-olds have completed primary school, only 48.8% of 18-24-year-olds have completed secondary school.<sup>3</sup> This quarter, 28 Free To Shine girls took the grade twelve exam and 26 passed. The extra support Free To Shine provides to the grade twelve girls on our program is part of what makes **our grade-twelve exam pass rate of 92.85%** so high as compared to the national average of 68.62%.<sup>4</sup>

\* Names have been changed to protect their identities.

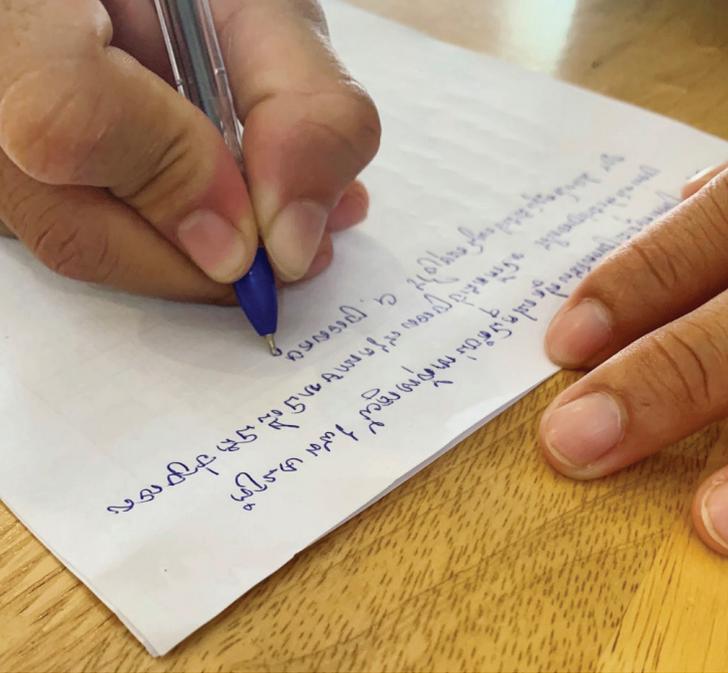
\*\*The term "primary school" here refers to grades 1-6, "secondary" refers to grades 7-9, and "high school" refers to grades 10-12.

1 G. Subrahmanyam, 'Gender Perspectives on Causes and Effects of School Dropouts', Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), 2016, [http://www.ungei.org/Final\\_Paper\\_on\\_Gender\\_perspectives\\_C2.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/Final_Paper_on_Gender_perspectives_C2.pdf), (accessed 20 September 2019).

2 G. Subrahmanyam, 'Gender Perspectives on Causes and Effects of School Dropouts', Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), 2016, [http://www.ungei.org/Final\\_Paper\\_on\\_Gender\\_perspectives\\_C2.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/Final_Paper_on_Gender_perspectives_C2.pdf), (accessed 20 September 2019).

3 National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning 'Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2017', Phnom Penh: National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, 2018, p. 51, <http://www.nis.gov.kh/nis/CSES/Final%20Report%20CSES%202017.pdf>, (accessed 20 September 2019).

4 K. Mom, '68 percent of students pass high school exam' Khmer Times, 9 September 2019, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50641560/68-percent-of-students-pass-high-school-exam/>, (accessed 20 September 2019).



Within the Cambodian public education system, students have to pass the end-of-year exam to continue on to the next grade. For Siem Reap province, the grade twelve exam takes place in Siem Reap city, so students from the over 1,000 schools in the Province journey to the city for the three days of exams. For families who live day-to-day, the cost of transportation and accommodation in the city can be a large burden. Students will wake up before daybreak each morning to find a ride into the city, or else will try to find accommodation with extended family or friends in the city for exam days. For students from the rural communities who have never been to the city, three days in the bustling environment of Siem Reap without family and with the stress of exams on their minds can be incredibly overwhelming.

Free To Shine provides financial support to all the grade twelve girls on our program for the exam, including money for transportation and food, and pre-vetted safe accommodation. Beyond this, we also support grade eleven and twelve girls with an extra month of additional curriculum classes prior to the exam period and counseling on studying and exam stress. "In the month before the exam, our team goes out into the field to meet with the grade twelve girls one-on-one and we share information with them about the exam and discuss their travel plans with them. We give them verbal encouragement and tips to concentrate, and tell them not to rush or be afraid when they don't recognise a question," explains Social Worker Bona, "for many of them, it's their first time being far from their village, so this helps them to feel more ready and less worried."

With Free To Shine's support, girls like Sina can become some of the first in their family or community to finish both primary and high school, pass their grade twelve exam, and even dream of going on to university. Sina, like many of the other girls on our program, have had to overcome tremendous odds to make it this far. Both of her parents have physical disabilities, and cannot work outside the home. To support themselves and their two daughters, Sina's parents grow vegetables and look after cows and chickens to sell. Though neither of them have received an education, they value education for their daughters beyond anything else and are incredibly supportive. Their disabilities means their children have to do a lot of tasks around the home to support the family, but Sina and her sister are positive and never complain.

The community has rallied behind Sina and her family to support them in any way they can. Like many other rural communities across Cambodia, Sina's village doesn't have a high school, so once she completed primary school, Sina and her family made the decision that Sina would move in with a friend's family to be closer to the nearest high school. Since then, she has had to move several times, and has had to learn a level of independence from having to live so far from her family. Throughout this time, Free To Shine has been there to offer financial and social work support to her and her family. We have ensured she is in a safe and secure living environment by meeting with her caregivers and conducting safety checks at her new home, and meeting with her school director to discuss her progress in school.

Despite the many challenges she has faced in her life, Sina is resilient, and has never given up on her education. In the words of her Social Worker, "In secondary school she was a good student, but in high school after she moved she began to try even harder and has always gotten ranked number one in the class. She wanted to show everyone that even though she came from a very rural area, she could succeed." In September, Sina successfully passed her grade twelve exam and received one of the five funded university places. Sina plans to study law because she wants "to find justice for people, to help improve my country, and to help people around me to be together."

Through all she has accomplished, Sina and the other grade twelve girls have become role models for their younger siblings and for the other children in their communities. In the rural communities Free To Shine works in, many of the adults that children are surrounded by never had the opportunity to finish secondary school or even primary school, and some have never been to school at all. This can make it hard for young people to imagine the career opportunities they have open to them beyond the village they grew up in. Having role models like Sina who have graduated from high school despite adversity can have a huge impact on shaping their future goals and motivating them to continue in school.



## EDUCATING GIRLS

Educating girls has tremendous impacts on her personal wellbeing and can empower her politically, socially, and economically. It can also have huge impacts on the health and wellbeing of her family and community.<sup>5, 6</sup>

Just one additional year of school equates to an increase in a woman's income by 10-20%.<sup>7</sup> Achieving universal secondary education would mean the virtual elimination of child marriage, a decrease in intimate partner violence, and a one tenth increase in women's household decision making and agency.<sup>8</sup> According to one study, educating girls averted more than 30 million deaths of children under five.<sup>9</sup>

While any increased education will benefit girls and women, primary schooling "is not sufficient". According to a World Bank Report, "the gains associated with educational attainment tend to be substantial only with a secondary education."<sup>10</sup> While Cambodia has high enrollment rates in primary school, retention rates as students progress to secondary school drop dramatically.<sup>11</sup> The support that Free To Shine offers girls is critical to ensuring they stay safe and in school beyond the primary level, and have the skills and knowledge they need to shape and lead their communities and country.

\*The term "secondary" here refers to grades 7-12.

5. Q. Wodon et al., 'Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of not Educating Girls', The Cost of Not Educating Girls Series, Washington D.C.: World Bank Group, 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29956/HighCostOfNotEducatingGirls.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>, (accessed 16 September 2019).
6. UNESCO, 'Girls Education - the Facts', Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2013, <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/sites/gem-report/files/girls-factsheet-en.pdf> (accessed 16 September 2019).
7. UNICEF, 'UNICEF says Education for Women and Girls a Lifeline to Development,' 2011, [https://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_58417.html](https://www.unicef.org/media/media_58417.html), (accessed 19 September 2018).
8. Q. Wodon et al., op. cit.
9. International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 'The Learning Generation: Investing in Education for a Changing World', 2018, p. 34, <https://report.educationcommission.org/report/> (accessed 17 September 2019).
10. Q. Wodon et al., op. cit., p. 3.
11. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, op. cit.

