

JANUARY 1 TO MARCH 30 2019

# QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

This Quarterly Impact Report we will look at the story of Kagna\*, going into depth in looking at the steps Free To Shine's Social Workers take to address common issues of concern and how they work to ensure the safety of the vulnerable girls on our program.

TOTAL NUMBERS



753

GIRLS ENROLLED



59

VILLAGE PARTNERSHIPS



20

HOUSES BUILT



147

COMMUNITY TRAININGS TAUGHT



644

WATER FILTERS DELIVERED

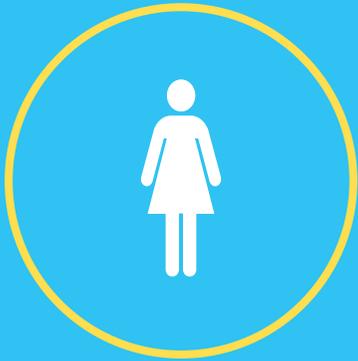


865

BIKES DELIVERED

# THE NUMBERS

THIS QUARTER



4

GIRLS ENROLLED



9

COMMUNITY TRAININGS TAUGHT



11

WATER FILTERS DELIVERED



11

BIKES DELIVERED

## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the devastating effects of the genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime, in the post-war period, there was a dearth of educated professionals, including Social Workers, teachers, and other crucial actors in child development.

According to a UNICEF report, in 2016, Cambodia had only one Social Worker for every 25,000 people. But Cambodia's story today is one of hope, rebirth, and growth. In 2012, the first cohort of students graduated from the Royal University of Phnom Penh with degrees in Social Work. Since then, the University has graduated 20 students each year from the program, beginning to fill a much needed gap in social support services for vulnerable families across Cambodia.

We have three Social Workers for the families on our program. Our Social Workers play an important role in assessing and responding to situations of poverty, violence, and exploitation. Free To Shine's Social Work Program follows the family-based model of care, which recognises that children are most likely to succeed within a supportive family environment. Thus, ensuring the safety of a girl on our program means ensuring the safety of her family. Social Workers provide psychosocial support to address intergenerational trauma, addiction, violence, and other interlinking factors that place a girl at risk. Our Social Workers know that certain families are more vulnerable to structural inequities and situational factors that lead to children dropping out of school. By taking an ecological approach, Social Workers identify the interplay between individual, family, community, and social

factors to gain a more in depth understanding of the risk and protection factors associated with the child protection concerns. Social Workers build up a relationship of trust with each family and surrounding community members and develop targeted intervention plans tailored to their needs. In doing so, Social Workers help families develop concrete action plans and next steps to overcome the challenges they face. By ensuring girls are given room to grow and flourish in safe and supportive home and school environments, we are reducing her vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation and increasing her future employment opportunities and personal wellbeing.

Each Social Work case is unique, however, Kagna's\* case highlights some of the red flags that our Social Workers commonly encounter in working with rural Cambodian families. Although Kagna's case is ongoing, this past quarter has exemplified the cumulative effects and high impact of Free To Shine's Social Work program in dealing with safety concerns. This quarter, Kagna's confidence, communication skills, and ferocity have blossomed. Free To Shine's Social Workers have played a vital role in facilitating this growth. This case demonstrates the action steps taken by Free To Shine's team in addressing situations of concern, and shows how we utilise the networks of support existing within communities to ensure the long-term safety and success of the girls on our program.

\* Names have been changed to protect their identities.





Kagna was a shy ten-year-old in grade 5 when she was first assessed by Free To Shine in February of 2015. Her father had died of tuberculosis three years prior, and her mother had since remarried and migrated to Thailand with her new husband to work in the construction sector. Her mother had not sent any money home to support Kagna. At the time of the assessment, Kagna was living in a house with 15 extended family members, including several siblings who had already left school before grade 9. Based on these factors, Education Officers determined her to be at risk of dropping out of school and enrolled her in our Education Program. Luckily, in addition to her Education Officers, Kagna's grandmother was a strong pillar of support for Kagna, working hard to support her large family by selling food at a small stand and weaving hats, and encouraging her granddaughter to stay in school.

Then in early 2017, Kagna's mother returned from Thailand, and the dynamic in the home changed. Kagna's mother began drinking, gambling, and causing problems within the family. She started pressuring Kagna, who had just turned 12, to drop out of school, migrate to Thailand to live with her and her new husband, and work in construction. When Kagna's Education Officer learned of her changed circumstances during a monthly visit, she initiated the process of referring Kagna to our Social Work program for additional support.

1. The Education Situation of Children of Migrant Families in Selected ASEAN Countries. Aide et Action International Southeast Asia & China, 2016.

## CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

Children left behind also face risks to their education. In Cambodia, migrating parents often leave their young school-aged children in the care of grandparents. This loss of parents often leads to decreased household income at the day-to-day level, placing additional burdens on children.

Children left behind often have to work more, both inside and outside the household in order to meet shortfalls in household income. Girls in particular are often expected to take on the responsibility for caring roles previously done by the migrant mother.

As a whole, children left behind have higher rates of non-enrollment, irregular attendance, year repetition, and drop out. Often these children are left with feelings of trauma and abandonment, and are at greater risk of exploitation and abuse.<sup>1</sup> At Free To Shine, even more destabilizing than a parent who has left are situations of transience, in which parents move back and forth between Cambodia and neighbouring countries depending on the season or job availability. Children who migrate with parents have an even higher likelihood of non-enrollment and are more likely to discontinue their education.



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

The destructive effects of the Cambodian Civil War on the Cambodian health system are still felt across the country today. Fewer than 50 of the 600 doctors that were working in the pre-war period survived the Khmer Rouge, and high-grade medical equipment was damaged or destroyed.<sup>2-3</sup> The consequences of this are limited accessibility to reliable and affordable healthcare for many and a reliance on the traditional healers and untrained health care providers that have grown in numbers to fill this gap.<sup>4</sup> Most Cambodians still understand illness as being a result of moral or social transgression. Traditional healers address these social and moral dimensions and perform a variety of health care and social services, including medical care, counseling, and religious ceremonies.

When facing illness, most rural Cambodians choose to go to traditional healers instead of district hospitals or private clinics not only because of belief and personal connection commonly provided by traditional healers but also because of accessibility and cost.<sup>5</sup> Traditional healers are more affordable. In Cambodia, public hospitals are not free and about 75% of the cost of healthcare expenditures are paid for out-of-pocket. For families living on a few dollars a day, the burden of high costs for accessing and receiving health care - even in the case of minor illnesses - can often lead to an economic crisis within the household. There are certainly cases where traditional healers are skilled and well suited to treat the illness presented, but in other serious cases, the application of traditional remedies or medical care by untrained practitioners can be risky and misinformation can exacerbate the problem.<sup>6</sup>

Then at the end of December 2018, Kagna broke her arm in a motorcycle accident and went to a traditional healer for treatment. The bone did not set correctly and Kagna began missing class because she could not ride her bicycle to school or use her hand to write. She began falling behind and missing tests. Concerned, her grandmother reached out to Free To Shine for support and advice.

Kagna's case illustrates two areas of concern that Free To Shine often encounters when working with vulnerable communities in the rural villages surrounding Siem Reap: migration and illness.

2. Mam B, Key PJ. Cambodian health in transition. *BMJ* 1995; 311(7002): 435-437.

3. Hill PS, Eang MT. Resistance and renewal: Health sector reform and Cambodia's national tuberculosis programme. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2007; 85(8): 631-636.

4. Health worker effectiveness and retention in rural Cambodia *Rural and Remote Health* 10: 1391. (Online), 2010. Available from: <http://www.rrh.org.au>

5. Jan Ovesen And Trankell, IB. *Cambodians And Their Doctors: A Unique Blend Of Historical Anthropology And Contemporary Ethnography*. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press. 2010.

6. Unlicensed to Heal. 101 East 2016; 5:6. *Al Jazeera English*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/101east/2016/03/cambodia-unlicensed-heal-160309111458745.html>.

## MIGRATION: OUR APPROACH

A large number of the girls on our program have parents who have migrated to Thailand or other neighbouring countries in search of higher-paying employment opportunities or migrate back and forth between Cambodia and a neighbouring country. In Kagna's situation, where her mother had begun to pressure her to drop out of school and migrate, Free To Shine's Program Manager and Social Worker developed a three-pronged approach to mitigate the identified risks. The first step was to increase the frequency of safety checks to the home; Kagna's Social Worker began visiting twice per month instead of the usual once per month. The second step was to talk with Kagna and her primary caregiver/advocate (in this case, her grandmother) about the risks involved in migration and long-term benefits of staying in school. Kagna had previously attended Free To Shine's Community Training Session on the Dangers of Migration to Thailand, so the Social Worker was able to build on this knowledge during these safety checks with Kagna and her grandmother. Perhaps most importantly, in conversations with her mother, Kagna was outspoken and firm about her right to education and desire to continue learning. Staying in school despite her mother's wishes was an extremely brave act. The third prong of her Social Worker's approach was connecting Kagna and her grandmother to the resources available in their community that could offer them support. Free To Shine works hard to build relationships of trust and mutual cooperation with the community leaders and local authorities in the communities we work with. This includes Community Activists, Village Chiefs, Commune Leaders, the Commune Council for Women and Children, and other government officials. Utilising these existing systems of support is a key component of ensuring the safety nets we build for the girls on our program and their families are strong and sustainable.





## HEALTH: OUR APPROACH

For families lucky enough to reside in Siem Reap Province, Angkor Hospital for Children's free pediatric healthcare program provides rare low-cost access to high quality healthcare. Despite this, the costs of transportation to the hospital from rural areas and provision of food during treatment are an extra financial burden that many families cannot afford. Free To Shine's financial support for these extra costs is often what tips the balance for families in their decision about where to go for care in serious situations of illness. In Kagna's case, Free To Shine's Program Manager and Social Worker took two steps to address the health situation that was impeding her education. First, her Social Worker met with Kagna and her family to discuss the potential benefits of going to a public hospital for an X-Ray and provided her care-giver with funds needed to make the trip for each check up and follow up. It was fortunate Kagna and her family elected to go to the hospital, as her case required surgery. Second, her Social Worker arranged for neighbours to transport her to class when possible and for her teachers and friends to support her with any missed assignments and note taking. Again, a key factor in ensuring the safety and continued education of a girl on our program proved to Free To Shine's ability to connect girls to local resources and community networks of support. Throughout her illness, Kagna's grandmother was a champion of her health and proactively sought out support from Free To Shine and the doctors at Angkor Hospital for Children. Despite being a child left behind, Kagna's grandmother was an exceptional caregiver. With the resources provided by Free To Shine, Kagna and her grandmother were better informed and supported to navigate these challenges.

## KAGNA TODAY

Although her case is ongoing, with Free To Shine's Social Work intervention, Kagna's risk of discontinuing her education and being placed in a position of exploitation has been greatly diminished. Beyond this, Kagna is growing into a strong young woman and continues to fight for her education and future. In the words of her Social Worker, "where before she held everything in, now she isn't afraid to talk about her feelings and express herself." With her Social Worker, Kagna talks about her goals and how she can achieve them: of graduating from high school and becoming a teacher for children like her. This is our greatest success as an organisation, when we can support girls to become fierce advocates for themselves and their communities.

*"She is different from other students. Her history is a very hard situation, her father passed away and her mom has a new husband. In her family she is the only one with a high education. Even if she's in a difficult situation, she is still moving forward to achieve her goals. I am so proud of her and I want to see her achieve her dream in the future. Hers is model case that we can share with students: everybody is faced with a hard situation, but we can be strong despite our hardships, we can fight. People that are faced with a hard situation but do not give up can achieve big things in the future."* - KONGKEA, SOCIAL WORKER

