



QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT

JANUARY TO MARCH 2022

A global pandemic: 2 years on

How has the global Covid-19 pandemic affected Free To Shine, the girls and families on our program, and our team for these two years from March 2020 to March 2022?

There have been many impacts including fear, illness, minimal health resources, and loss of jobs. Many government resources were redirected into policing the pandemic and restrictions, so other crimes received less focus.



745

Safety Visits



448

Social Work
Interventions



188

Adults attending
community
trainings



43

Students graduating
grade 12



43

43 out of 50
students passed
their national grade
12 exam



86%

Pass rate among Free
To Shine students,
compared to the
national average of
65.65%



17

Emerging Leaders
attending training



2

New university
funded places. One
studying Khmer
Literature and one
studying Law

THE NUMBERS THIS QUARTER



COVID INFECTIONS

6 girls on our program, and 12 families, reported to Free To Shine that they got COVID and went into a government quarantine treatment centre. None of the girls or families were hospitalised with COVID, nor did any die. Cambodia stopped recording case numbers of COVID in 2022.

LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT

70% of the families on our program included an income earner who lost a job during the past 2 years of COVID.

Siem Reap relies heavily on international tourism due to Angkor Wat, and this industry virtually ceased. Therefore people with jobs in hospitality and tourism were severely impacted. Most of the families on our program are semi-rural, so whilst they might not have been employed directly in this industry, their relatives who help support them were.

* Names have been changed to protect their identities.



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This year is very difficult because my family has no income, and due to the COVID pandemic causing school closures. The solution for me is to try to self-study at home and make group study with my classmates to research lessons.

SREYDA*, GRADE 12

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FOOD INSECURITY

The situation was dire, yet the people we work with tend not to complain, stress, or “panic buy.” Since the families on our program don’t have the money to bulk buy, and don’t have refrigerators or freezers to store food anyway, they can’t stockpile. They continued to purchase their food daily. Where there was a shortage, they shared what they had and found ways to help each other.

Due to the financial impact of COVID on families, we provided various basic need packages such as emergency food, additional vegetable gardens and chickens. In the two years of COVID, we supported 187 families with basic need food packages thanks to SE Asia Foundation, 3PC and Go Philanthropic Foundation. It is important to be part of these networks who provide emotional as well as financial support.

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Over the past year I have learned how to make baskets and grow vegetables. This year, I faced some difficulties in learning so much because of the COVID pandemic. But no matter what, I will try my best to study well, and I am also happy that Free To Shine provided me with the seeds to plant more vegetables for my family.

CHOMPHA*, GRADE 7

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FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

We responded to 13 family and domestic violence incidents during the two years of COVID.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Schools closed for most of the two years. Some children did not have the resources to study online, and some schools did not offer online activities, though they found other ways to support the girls' learning. For example, if the teacher lived in the village, they would hand out worksheets that students could collect.

50% of the girls on our program accessed online learning for the 2 year period.

Each girl on our program now has a smartphone for online learning, however this was not the case when the pandemic began and schools first closed. Some girls went to friends' houses to join online learning with them because they had smartphones, some girls' parents borrowed money to buy their children a smartphone, and some girls went to work to earn money to buy their phone.

We provided internet data cards so girls and families didn't have ongoing internet costs to access online learning. However, in some rural areas the network is unstable and slow, and some did not have signal.

Due to family members losing jobs, many children went to work. Many of these children helped their families continue their loan repayments as Microfinance institutions did not offer flexibility on repayments during COVID.

13 children under the age of 15 participated in unsafe work.

62 girls (14%) discontinued school entirely during COVID.

Vocational training, which provides an educational pathway for a lot of girls who discontinue school early but still want to develop skills, stopped during the pandemic.

18 girls under the age of 18, got married.

Schools have now reopened and children have returned to the classroom, including those girls on our program who moved to other areas to farm.

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Over the past year, I have learned new knowledge and new lessons such as the history of Cambodia and some life skills related to the COVID pandemic. Even though studying in school has been postponed, I have been doing self study at home, and my teachers have arranged group studies. In one year, I have improved myself on subjects that I am very poor at, such as chemistry. I have been studying harder until I was able to get good scores.

SOPHEA*, GRADE 9

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Over the past year, I have learned about general knowledge in life. I have had problems such as the school being closed due to COVID and the school requiring students to study online. Learning online is very difficult due to the weak internet service and listening to the teacher's explanation. My solution is to study on my own, and ask friends to help with the points that I don't understand.

NONG*, GRADE 10

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OUR TEAM

Due to the early financial impact of the pandemic on some of our sponsors and donors, and the restrictions on events and therefore our fundraising ability, we reduced our team from 24 team members to 15. However, we chose not to remove any girls or families from our program during a time when they required increased support. While some activities were paused, and others were streamlined, the workload of remaining team members still massively increased.

Our Program Manager was on annual leave in Australia when the pandemic began, and was unable to return to Cambodia as planned.

Our Managing Director has also been unable to travel regularly to Cambodia. Our Program Manager and Managing Director continued leading the team and the organisation full-time, albeit remotely.

For a period of time we could not access our bank accounts in Cambodia as our signatories were not in the country anymore. We had to open new accounts with a new bank, using other team members as signatories. Our Program Officer and Finance Officer have stepped up in their leadership, and all challenges considered the team has functioned very well.

7 weeks were spent with some team members in the government quarantine centre while

others were required to isolate. And there were many other weeks of varying degrees of isolation and red zone restrictions.

Government restrictions meant that for a period of time we could not conduct safety visits in the villages, so we worked with girls and families through phone calls, although we were able to obtain permission when required to visit specific families for specific reasons.

All in all, the global pandemic provided unprecedented challenges, yet we have fared better than we thought we might. Our supporters have remained loyal, and we have even found ways to grow and strengthen ourselves.