



## **Report: PEPY Battambang Scholars**

### **Overview of Project**

*This project has been in operation for just under 2 years.*

*To begin with a précis for anyone who is not aware of its remit and purpose.*

*The Rotary Clubs of Highton and Ocean Grove in Australia approached us at RCPP some time ago regarding the possibility of an educational project involving students, specifically aimed at those youngsters living out in the provinces. Without revisiting all fine details, the upshot was that in conjunction with the PEPY organisation based in SR they would be more than willing to financially support, initially 2 but as it turned out finally 3 student teachers [in science/maths subjects] who were in their last year of teacher training and who would also be given some financial support for their first year of teaching. ( starting salaries for teachers in the provinces being rather modest ) Discussions took place and several zoom meetings were held.*

*Finally the three students chosen by PEPY were ;*

*CHHAB HING (f) Chemistry*

*TABB SAOKUN (f) Physics*

*MAO MORN (m) Biology*

*They are 3 scholars from financially disadvantaged backgrounds who would have found it exceedingly difficult to continue their studies and stay in the provincial parts of the country without the help provided by the two Rotary clubs. In year 1 of the project PEPY were able to provide a small proportion of the money but due to financial constraints they were unable to continue their support in Year 2. Thankfully, the two Australian clubs were ( following a short Zoom meeting ) generous enough to make up the shortfall.*

*Details of the three students, their families and backgrounds are available in the PEPY Battambang Scholars reports which have been provided on a regular basis and are available to peruse. (Please let me know if you need help with this )*

*PP Michael Wright and myself were due to visit Battambang in August 2022 to speak with the three students directly but unfortunately we encountered a mechanical problem on the way up and were forced to cancel our meeting.*

*However in September (30<sup>th</sup>) the two female scholars made it down to Phnom Penh and they were invited to the club. Graeme Batrouney from RC Ocean Grove and Paul Brewster from RC Highton joined us via Zoom and translation assistance was kindly provided by Sreyneth Prak from Norton University. Through Syreyneth the two young girls were able to speak positively about their experiences and the worth and value of this project. They thanked everyone at Rotary for the help and support which has enabled them to be in a position where they will soon be able to pass on their science skills to many young students in rural public schools.*

*It was agreed that early in 2023 PP Michael and myself would make another attempt to visit the three scholars in Battambang. Unfortunately fate was once again not smiling on us and Michael was unable to make it up to Battambang owing to a leg injury. In the event and with the financial support of the two Australian clubs I purchased a bus ticket and Michael kindly arranged a booking for me in a hotel close to the center of the town. This would enable the three young people to meet with me and receive their bursaries.*

Visit to Battambang 27<sup>th</sup> / 28<sup>th</sup> February

*Having finally made it up to Battambang on Monday the 27<sup>th</sup> February, I checked into the Sanctuary Villa Hotel where I met with the 3 PEPY Scholars at 8.00 am on the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>.*

*Chhab Hing, Tabb Saokun and Mao Morn were accompanied by a young student friend of theirs as you will have seen from the photographs taken that morning which I believe I have already forwarded.*

*After a short discussion relating to their activities etc since we last met in September 2022 in Phnom Penh I presented them with their money (\$1000 each) and told them to put it in the bank and use it wisely to support their final studies and their first few months of employment as science teachers. Morn, Hing and Saokun have already sorted out their first appointments and will begin teaching in public schools this Autumn.*

*Obviously they were extremely happy to receive their money and wanted me to convey their thanks to everyone at RC Highton and RC Ocean Grove who have been so generous with their financial support of this project over the last two years.*

*I indicated that it would be nice to arrange a Zoom meeting one Friday lunchtime 12.30 - 1.00pm (Phnom Penh time) so that they can properly thank everyone at the Australian Rotary Clubs personally and so that we can all find out more about the way in which this money has helped them during their studies.*

*We decided that July would probably be an appropriate time. Therefore I will keep you up to date and make sure that everyone is free on the specific Friday we eventually settle on.*

*[Of course if you would like a Zoom meeting with any of us here at RCPP please let me know.]*

*I made my farewells, checked, out of the Sanctuary Villa (which by the way I can heartily recommend to anyone who visits Battambang) and left the three students (+ friend) at around 9.50 am in order to get the bus back to Phnom Penh.*

*If you have any questions/comments etc. please email me.*

*Thanks once again to all of you at RC Highton and RC Ocean Grove for your generous support and help to these 3 worthy students and we look forward to seeing you again soon.*

*Best Wishes      Bob Wightman VP RCPP*