



About the Riverkids organization

1. Name of the organization applying for the grant: RIVERKIDS FOUNDATION
2. Address where the projects are carried out: #1882 Bis, Street 60, Psar Touch Village, Toul Sang Ke Quarter, Reussey Keo District, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
3. Legal representatives of the organization: Dale Edmonds (Chairperson) and Phy Sophon (Executive Director)
4. Legal Status of the organization: Cambodian Non-Governmental Organisation
5. Year of foundation of the organization: 2007
6. Contact persons and details in Singapore:

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Executive Summary

1. Riverkids' Mission

- a) To prevent the sale of vulnerable children by training and seeking safe jobs for their parents, especially mothers, so that they can support their families and not rely on child labour and child trafficking.
- b) To prevent the exploitation and abuse of children such as child labour and sexual abuse by providing direct community-based support, both practical for education and food, and psychological with counseling and abuse intervention.

2. A brief summary of the projects Riverkids has implemented in these last two years and the geographical area covered.

Riverkids works to fight child trafficking in several slum communities of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Riverkids directly addresses the “supply” side of the trafficking chain by investing in the education of vulnerable children in the slums while supporting their families with healthcare, social work, vocational training and other programmes to sharply reduce the incentives to sell children to traffickers, abuse them or exploit them through child labour.

Riverkids has expanded in the last two years to a total of four community sites: Psar Touch (Alexandra), Railway One (Blum) and Railway Two (Compassion), and Kilomet Six. All of the community sites are located in or adjacent to poor urban slums in Phnom Penh that are notorious for child trafficking.

Over 600 vulnerable children living within these areas are now accessing Riverkids programmes while their families also receive support towards safe employment, financial self-sustainability and healthy parenting. Our programmes have reached over 2,300 people in the slums directly and indirectly.

Riverkids' operations include kindergarten classes, before- and after-school tuition for grade-schoolers, teenage vocational and educational programmes, vocational training for adults, healthcare and nutritional support, social worker support and community education on topics such as birth control, baby care and HIV/other health issues. In addition, the organisation offers emergency shelter for extremely at-risk children.

Riverkids addresses both the immediate short-term challenges and fundamental long-term challenges our families face.

The immediate short-term challenges are getting vulnerable kids into school or vocational training, addressing widespread child malnutrition with meals and nutritional education, providing basic and emergency medical care and closely monitoring this highly vulnerable group for physical and sexual abuse, intervening with psychological counseling, safe shelter and legal assistance from partner organisations where needed.

The fundamental long-term challenges are improving the family's financial stability and employment, improving their parenting skills, building community intra-support for struggling families such as single parents and drug addicted parents, and connecting them to medical and legal organisations for critical needs such as for HIV retrovirals.



3. Our experience and success in dealing with trafficking and abuse in Cambodia

Trafficking is a major problem in South-East Asia. In Cambodia, widespread poverty, gender inequalities and the generational trauma of the civil war and genocide of the Pol Pot era interact to create a toxic disaster for vulnerable children that supplies child traffickers.

Cambodia is a rapidly developing country but 35 per cent of the population still lives below the poverty line of just US\$0.50 a day.

In Phnom Penh, nearly half the city lives in crowded slums. Unemployment is high, and for many in the slums, the lack of educational or vocational training has trapped them in badly paid, unsafe manual labour or driven them to commercial sex work. Some force their children to work unsafe jobs instead of staying in school. Health services and primary education is theoretically free for the very poor, but in practice, corruption means that poor children are routinely denied access to hospitals and schools.

Abuse flourishes in this crowded and stressful environment, with widespread domestic violence, and chronic drug, alcohol and gambling addictions that lead to a vicious debt cycle that leave families ruined. Child trafficking is a short-term windfall that quickly vanishes, leaving a broken family and a vanished child.

Riverkids works hard to offer these parents, especially mothers, other income opportunities through microfinance, vocational training and medical and social work support, to change the fundamental financial and psychological challenges that make their families highly vulnerable to trafficking. This prevents child trafficking by choking the supply of willing sellers of children.

The track record for our community-centre model to prevent child trafficking shows our clear success. Our January 2007 target for this model was to reduce child trafficking rates (estimated at 35 per cent for teenage girls by the age of 18) to 15 per cent within the first year.

We succeeded and currently, we have managed to bring that to under 4 per cent. We have also intervened successfully in domestic violence, rape, child sexual abuse and child labour cases as well. Over the past five years, we have seen the majority of our families change completely from opposing school to paying for their children's fees and supporting them strongly.



Riverkids Operations

1. Who we help

Children from extremely poor families in Cambodia who are exploited and abused, often trafficked internally for black market adoptions, forced work in factories, construction sites or brothels, or trafficked to Thailand and Vietnam to beg or worse. Families trapped in poverty with no social net and labouring under severe difficulties such as HIV, alcoholism or domestic violence, are unable to adequately care for and protect their children from traffickers and abusers.

Riverkids has found in our slums that extreme poverty, unstable income, family dysfunction and health crises, especially chronic health problems such as HIV or TB, are the major issues that high-risk families face.

We identify highly vulnerable families as those living within our target poor urban communities who have either already trafficked, exploited or abused a child, or who have a major crisis such as HIV or labour-trafficked parents, or are in a known high-risk category, such as teenage step-children.

2. How our model is implemented

Our main activities are the provision of education, social work, income generation and health programmes from a community centre within or adjacent to a target site. These programs directly benefit up to around 150 children at each site.

Developing a new site:

1. Identify immediate high-risk children
2. Open an initial classroom at the site
3. Expand programs at the site to meet specific community needs
4. Identify hidden high-risk children through community knowledge
5. Enrol parents and families in programs to address long-term challenges
6. Graduate families that have transitioned to stable and thriving

We roll out our programmes at a new site by first opening a single classroom for our afterschool tuition programme, with one teacher, one housemother and a social worker working with 25 high-risk children aged 8 to 12 years old.

While we work with this first group, our social worker interviews and identifies more high-risk families. After several months, we add additional programmes tailored to the slum's most urgent needs, and expand our education programs, such as to an additional afterschool class, state school enrolment and a kindergarten.

This staggered approach means our pro programmes are effective for the needs of that specific community, supported by the community and reach the most vulnerable children.



3. Long-term Sustainability

A significant minority of our families have recovered enough to graduate fully from our programmes. With support from our income generation programs such as small loans and business training, and positive changes from our social work programs such as reduced domestic violence or improved parenting, families have been both able and willing to take responsibility for some or all of their children's education needs.

We have families pay for extra English classes, pay school fees, provide stationery and more for their children. This has become a marker of social success within our slum communities.

For programme supplies, we have been able to source for donations of goods from Cambodian companies, a strong show of local support. Our school uniforms are sewn by our Bright Girls programme, a sheltered co-op workshop of teenage girls, providing direct employment and income. The Bright Girls have now begun sewing uniforms for other NGOs as well.

Our donor support is growing and we anticipate we will have funds to allocate to the project the second half of next year. There may also be scope to charge users of the service on a subsidized basis, for example, our day-care support, after the first year or free childcare support, provided they have attained steady and safe employment sufficient to cover these costs.

We have strong private individual donor support because our programs work. Volunteers in Cambodia are especially ardent supporters because they have seen both the need for and the effectiveness of our work in Cambodia.

4. Leveraging Our Network

Riverkids has developed close co-operative relationships with the local authorities in the areas we work in. We are part of two local organization coalitions, Chab Dai and the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, and have built direct working ties with complementary organisations in health, education, employment and social services to allow our families and children access a far greater range of services while keeping our costs low.

5. Monitoring and Assessing Programs

We evaluate our programmes on a regular basis to ensure that students are progressing academically and identify students that need additional help. This includes regular class reports on grades and behaviour from the state schools, as well as our own afterschool teachers.

We hold weekly staff meetings and prepare monthly written reports on our activities in Phnom Penh, which helps us monitor our work and identify areas for improvement or expansion. In addition, our social workers are interacting on a daily basis with families in the communities where we work, and will monitor the experiences of our beneficiaries.

We monitor the health, academic progress and behaviour of the children through our housemothers' reports and monitoring by our social workers. As with all our families, all staff are trained to also look out for signs of deteriorating family conditions that may put children at risk of trafficking.



For education, example, we track the impact and effectiveness of our project with the following indicators:

- A - Student drop-outs/Students enrolled – under 15%
- B - High school graduates/High school students enrolled – above 90%
- C - Days absent/Days attending school – less than 10%
- D - Students enrolled/Children identified as high-risk – more than 60%

As we want our project to have maximum impact, we work on a long-term strategy, making sure that we follow through with support for students through to high school and employment. We aim for a minimum of Grade 8 for the less academic children, who can then enter vocational training, and Grade 12 and further tertiary training for those capable.

6. Financial Management

Riverkids keeps detailed budgets and financial records in Cambodia and Singapore. Our full financial reports are regularly published on our website. We have quarterly audits by an external accountant in Cambodia. The majority of our funding is raised outside of Cambodia and is managed by our Singapore office, with a limit of up to three months' operational funding made available within Cambodia.

Our payroll policy is to pay strictly average market-rate salaries with excellent health insurance and staff training benefits. We look for financial efficiencies such as negotiating bulk school fee payments and sourcing free or low-cost services from other organisations. We have strict internal financial regulations and a zero-tolerance policy for staff who break financial regulations.



Riverkids Programmes

Education

Kindergarten (75 children)

Half-day preschool that teaches basic literacy and social skills, with meals. Our kindergarten graduates have excelled in grade school. Kindergarten also provides daycare for working parents.

Annual US\$23,953.80

One month for a child: US\$26.62

Afterschool Grade School (85 children)

Half-day tuition classes for Khmer and mathematics to help children studying in Grades 1-3. An additional snack and art and social skill activities help them thrive in the state schools with increased attendance and many of our children in the top of their class.

Annual US\$23,435.64

One month for a child: US\$22.98

State School Support (350 children)

From enrolling children aged 6 to 14 in their local state schools, we then support them with school fees, uniforms, books, stationery, bags and shoes, depending on their families' financial abilities. Our education staff and social workers follow up for school grades, exams and truancy.

Annual US\$91,064.41

One month for a child: US\$21.68

Higher Grade School Support (30 children)

An increasing number of our children have successfully graduated above primary school to high school. Riverkids supports them with their higher school fees and additional tuition when needed. Most of our high school students are also working part-time in safe jobs sourced by Riverkids.

Annual US\$14,600.52

One month for a child: US\$40.56

Smartypants Scholars (24 children)

An academic scholarship awarded to the top 3 per cent of our students to support their education at a rigorous private academic school.

Annual US\$17,716.42

One month for a child: US\$61.52

Little Birds (29 children)

Direct school support, counselling and transport by tuk-tuk for Riverkids children who have moved away from our sites to continue support for them in their new communities.

Annual US\$6,849.34

One month for a child: US\$19.68



Get Ready for Girls and Get Ready for Boys (26 children)

Our innovative programmes for extremely high-risk teenagers aged 11 to 19 who are unable to integrate directly back into school. The nine-month program helps them with basic literacy, financial, work and social skills, and ends with them integrating back into the school programs or vocational training programmes.

Annual US\$33,512.78

One month for a child: US\$107.41

Choir (30 children)

A low-cost social activity that encourages social skills, co-operation and confidence, especially for our more timid children.

Annual US\$2,945.52

One month for a child: US\$8.18

Football (30 children)

Our most popular weekly activity for girls and boys. Some of our football players have represented Cambodia in the international Homeless World Cup and now play for Cambodian national teams.

Annual US\$3,443.52

One month for a child: US\$9.57

English Class (85 children)

Taught under staff supervision by local Cambodian volunteers, our basic English class teaches conversational English. Promising advanced students are sponsored to further English classes at an external local school.

Annual US\$10,577.64

One month for a child: US\$10.37

Yoga Class (70 children)

Yoga sessions led by Cambodian teachers that help our angriest and most difficult children learn self-control and calm them before classes.

Annual US\$5,312.88

One month for a child: US\$7.47

Dance - Traditional Khmer and Breakdancing (100 children)

Traditional Khmer dancing and breakdancing taught in alternate weeks with exhibitions and competitions to develop their confidence and team spirit.

Annual US\$7,928.40

One month for a child: US\$6.61



Social Work

Social Work & Counselling (75 families)

The thread that ties all our other programmes together. Our social workers match families to programmes aimed at what puts them at risk. From identifying families at risk, counselling, and providing shelter during a crisis, to building community response to child trafficking through workshops, we identify and intervene with our most vulnerable families before a crisis turns into child trafficking and exploitation.

Annual US\$23,983.80

One month for a child: US\$26.65

Weekly Boarding (35 children)

Children experiencing severe abuse at home or a family crisis such as a seriously ill parent, can stay at our weekly shelter under the care of our housemothers. Most of our weekly boarders stay for less than a month, reuniting with their families after the crisis has passed.

Annual US\$25,284.44

One month for a child: US\$60.20

Health

Healthcare support (150 children)

Our nurse provides basic first-aid and health education for all children and families in our programme, including referrals and support to other health organisations for further medical needs. From multivitamins to prenatal check-ups, each month we provide a wide range of preventive and basic medical care. Healthcare for children is always free. For adults, it is pro-rated by the family's financial ability.

Annual US\$15,387.60

One month for a child: US\$8.55

Baby Bellies and the Baby Room (15 children)

Our Baby Bellies programme provides infant milk powder, fresh fruit and other support such as eggs and canned fish for malnourished or sick infants and toddlers. We also provide daycare at our centre for babies and toddlers whose mothers are in training programs or during a family crisis.

Annual US\$7,174.26

One month for a child: US\$39.86



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Work & Income

Business Training & Loans (15 families)

Riverkids runs a sheltered handicraft workshop for women to make accessories from mostly recycled materials, targeting women who are very unstable or limited in their capabilities. For those with more business potential, we provide microloans with financial and household budgeting training and employment skills to help them develop a working business or find on-going employment.

Annual US\$3,097.76

One month for a child: US\$17.21

Helping Hands Club (15 families)

Vocational training and apprenticeship scholarships for women and older teenagers who are unemployed or working as sex workers. The Helping Hands Club begins with a peer support group that leads to individual placements tailored to the woman's potential for a one-month to 12-month scholarship that includes income-replacement so they can transition to stable and safe fulltime employment.

Annual US\$38,722.76

One month for a child: US\$215.13