



Ponheary Ly Foundation  
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**Hereford Rotary**  
Koh Ker Library 2019-20

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Greetings from Cambodia!

We were very pleased indeed in January 2020 to receive £750 in support of Koh Ker School Library. The school year has officially ended and we are now able to give you a summary of what was accomplished.

The school year began in October 2019 and as you are aware, all Cambodian Schools were closed March 16, 2020. The pandemic was very polite to arrive at our fiscal mid-year point. In the detail to follow we'll point out the differences between the two halves of the year; in the first half it was very *much business as usual* and in the last half, operations were very unusual indeed!

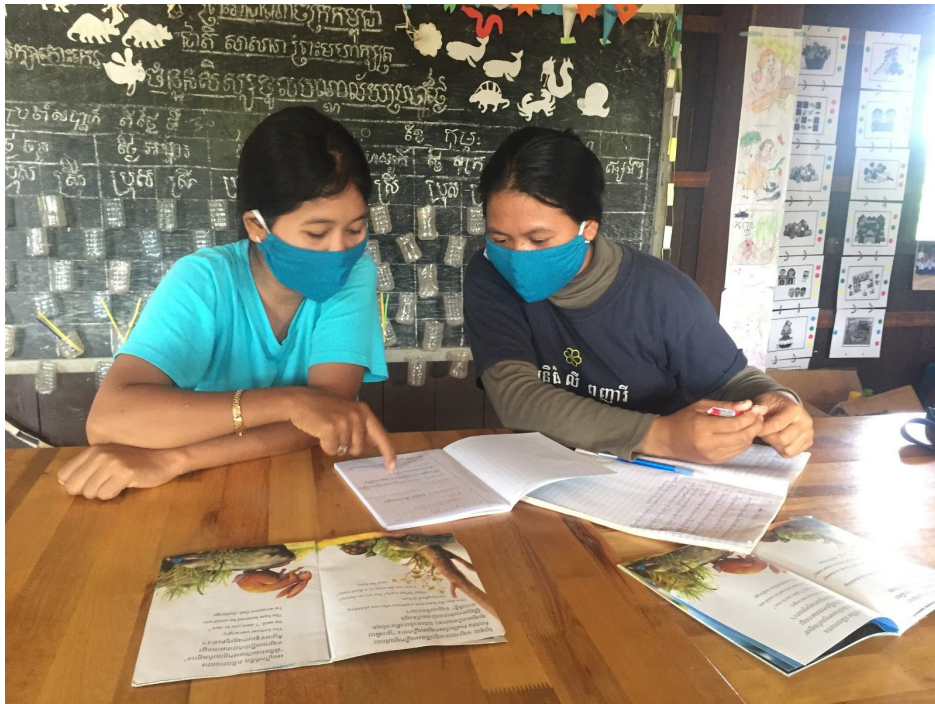


Every disaster has a silver lining if we open our eyes wide enough to notice them, and we have found ours with this project. Because of the utter inability of our students living in these remote areas to be able to access the haphazard offering of online classes for primary school students, the children at Koh Ker (and thousands of other places like Koh Ker) will have been away from proper school for 10 solid months by the time they return January 11, 2021. They will not repeat the grade; the government will pass them forward as



usual. In another year or so, they will be so far behind in their studies that many of them will throw their hands up and drop out. At age 10.

We hope you'll take a moment to have a read through our recent blogpost about the trainwreck that is the [current state of things](#).



In anticipation of these realities, the Team has been putting in the hours for the last 6 months to develop new remedial curricula to help students get caught up when they can return to the classroom properly.

We will begin teaching in November, 2 months ahead of school opening. We will be doing this not only at Koh Ker but also at Romchek and at Knar in the Learning Center. These months will be focused on grades 4-6, the time when Cambodian children learn to read and write. Every other

thing students learn is built on the foundation of literacy. During those two months, we won't be playing chess or ukuleles or learning English or having Science. We'll be catching up on Khmer Language lessons and reading lots of books. Not just at Koh Ker, but in every rural location.

All of these remedial initiatives will be using the Library as the hub of lessons and activities. Every language teacher's curriculum has activities in the weekly lesson plan that heavily rely on library activity. A robust library, with a librarian who can not only run the activities but manage a heavy volume of book lending is an absolute necessity. Luckily, we had that sturdy foundation in place and were able to build on it quickly.

During the first half of the year Sareng, the Koh Ker Librarian, had quite a lot of valuable Peer-Exchange with two other PLF librarians and a couple of librarians from an NGO with much bigger schools. New educational games were introduced and learned. That group had now formed a private Facebook Page where they share ideas and provide each other greatly needed support as they all work in considerable isolation.



This also proved to be extraordinarily useful when things took a sharp turn on March 16th.





We got special permission from the Ministry to open Libraries at our most rural schools, including Koh Ker. Since that time, once a week every grade can come to the library in small groups and check out books. While we haven't been allowing any "play time" in the library, we recently began letting the older ones loiter in the library for a bit as they have taken to enjoying sitting together and discussing the homework that the librarian is giving older students with their books.





Early on we took all the books out of the Srayang Dormitory and moved them into the primary school libraries at Koh Ker and Romchek so that the students who had been sent home from the Siem Reap Dormitories would also have books to read. By the way you may be interested in knowing that the Dormitory at Srayang is under deep renovation as it converts to our [second Learning Center](#). It also will have a massive library which will form the hub of all classes given at the Center.



**Some Interesting Data**

Book Lending took a strong upward trend during school closure. The data below shows a 35% increase in book borrowing and *does not yet include September*. Grades 4-6 are the target.

Lending The First Half		Lending the Second Half (less Sept)			
Kindergarten	4	10			
Grade 1	5	17			
Grade 2	177	266			
Grade 3	642	785			
Grade 4	769	996			
Grade 5	633	892			
Grade 6	340	526	There are only 11 students in gr 6- a 46% jump		
	<b>2570</b>	<b>3492</b>	35% increase in book borrowing (5 months only)		

<b>Koh Ker</b>	<b>545</b>
Storybook	259
English	11
Non-Fiction	21
Early Grade Reader	208
Young Adult	46

As you know, Koh Ker participates in our Book Rotation Scheme and normally we are rotating books from one library to another every month. Now we are doing it weekly. And buying books like crazy. There are currently 545 books at a library that serves 130 students in addition to the 11 displaced secondary school students who are eating up non-fiction and novel-type books for young adult readers. We are actually having trouble keeping up with demand.

### Financials

**Note that the amount for books is ⅓ the total of the Book Rotation that runs at three libraries.**

Date	Name	Memo	Amount
10/10/2019	Preah Vihear Book Center	Arts & Crafts materials	\$62.40
11/07/2019	Preah Vihear Book Center	Arts & Crafts materials	\$16.85
12/02/2019	Preah Vihear Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$45.20
02/02/2020	LA Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$28.45
04/24/2020	Preah Vihear Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$64.48
05/08/2020	IBC Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$82.30
05/22/2020	Preah Vihear Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$89.55
05/31/2020	IBC Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$40.63
06/02/2020	MI-A Japan	Large storage bags	\$34.00
06/05/2020	Preah Vihear Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$127.26
07/09/2020	Srayang Village	Feather duster	\$6.25
07/29/2020	Preah Vihear Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$96.50
08/10/2020	LA Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$64.48
08/23/2020	IBC Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$66.80
08/28/2020	IBC Book Center	Library books (Koh Ker Portion)	\$84.50
		<b>TOTAL 11 months</b>	<b>\$785.20</b>
		<b>Projected for September</b>	<b>\$215.00</b>
			<b>\$1,000.20</b>

Also note that only \$40 was spent on anything besides books! Since we were not having training in the city or arts & crafts activities or anything besides non-contact book lending during the second half, and since book lending during this time was doing such a brisk business, we converted all available funds into books.

Your £750 converted to approximately \$967.00 and once we complete book buying for the September rotations, we should be right at the amount of the grant.

I must admit, being this close to budget is a bit of an accident. We have been, to be honest, just buying books for all Libraries with a total disregard for budgets. It was one of the few things that was really working and aside from incessant food drops, was our only real space in which to engage with our students at Koh Ker..





As I mentioned, the education divide in Cambodia has increased exponentially during these troubling times. When we think broadly about what that means for our students who live in remote areas, it can be quite discouraging. But when we see an entire school become avid readers, we feel hopeful that when school resumes this converts from a *trend* into a *habit for life* and that it will have done it's work to at least sustain and maybe even forward our students' literacy during this time away from school.

**There was never a time when we were more grateful for your support of our Library at Koh Ker.**

Wishing you all the best. Stay well!

*Lori Carlson*

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