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 **World Renew Cambodia** 7 Dec
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Pray that we may find the right health experts as we improve our work in water, sanitation, and nutrition
#praymonday
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Photographers will do anything to get the perfect shot. Thanks @seanhawkeye for your work in capturing these stories
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World Renew Celebrates 20 years in Cambodia

*"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us."
Ephesians 3:20*

In 1993, a peace treaty was signed, officially ending nearly 18 years of civil war and border disputes in Cambodia. The country was poor. The population had very little education. The people were traumatized.

"The Christian community lost about 80% of its body, and only three Cambodian pastors made it out of the war alive," said Deb Wilson. Wilson opened World Renew's office in Cambodia in 1996. "There was a great need to get people out of poverty. The UN who had been managing Cambodia was getting ready to turn the country back over to government control, and many NGO's were opening offices; but their capacity was very low. With its well developed holistic and sustainable approach to development, this was a perfect time for World Renew to open an office in Cambodia."

"In 1996 when I started working in Cambodia, it felt like the whole country was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder," Wilson recalls. "Now as 2016 approaches, you can see God's healing hand at work, and an energy from the younger generation that is helping to restore Cambodia."

In the early years, World Renew's work was very limited with just four program staff and three NGO partners. Today, World Renew Cambodia has eight program staff, six NGO partners and eight church partners. Corruption, lack of trust, and low education were some of the major road blocks in establishing partnerships.



With support from our donors, World Renew Cambodia has improved livelihoods through more than 200 savings and loans groups, 15 farmer field schools, and intensive training to improve resilience in agricultural techniques.

World Renew's approach, which involves working with local partners to implement sustainable community development in the poorest rural communities, was quickly accepted by the staff. They understood the value of building the capacity of local NGOs—who are close to the people and understand the issues—to implement programs in the provinces where they are located.

Navy Chann, the World Renew Country Consultant from 1998 to 2009, recalls, "[At first] we couldn't sign partnership agreements with local NGOs or churches. We needed to first build their capacity. We did this by establishing learning circle networks to share experiences, provide training and build professional skills." World Renew worked with many local organizations through these learning circles. Over time, World Renew was able to establish partnerships with the strongest ones.

Working through churches has been a struggle for World Renew over the years. They are poor, isolated, and poorly resourced. Nevertheless, it remains a priority to support the local church. World Renew supports the vision of these local churches to be a cornerstone of faith and development for their communities.

World Renew Cambodia has become a leader in Cambodia in improving partnerships among government, citizens and business for more effective governance.

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“Community development work is a fine line to walk for a Christian organization; it can be in vain if it is not God-focused,” said Paulerk Sar, the program manager responsible for World Renew’s work with local churches. “We need to be careful that we are not only bringing blessings to the community, but reasons to celebrate as well. Spiritual change is slow and difficult to track. If the community doesn’t see spiritual change, there is no reason for celebration.”

World Renew’s office still looks the same as it did 20 years ago, but everything else around it has changed immensely. Located in the capital city of Phnom Penh, the streets bustle with traffic. Every day there are more cars on the roads. High-rise buildings are multiplying rapidly. Sounds of construction are never-ending. It is difficult to compare the city now to the image of Phnom Penh 20 years ago.

Drive just an hour out of the capital city, and you will get a very different view of Cambodia. Small villages, sometimes difficult to access due to poor infrastructure, are nestled between acres of rice fields. In the rural areas where World Renew works, education is low, health and sanitation is poor, and people struggle to feed their families.



☪ Savings group workshop held in 2003

World Renew’s approach to development focuses on building the capacity of communities to manage their own development. It is a more sustainable approach to community development as it leaves the local population better equipped to identify their needs and organize themselves to meet those needs. “We started a new community organization process in 2003. The concept was to use limited funds from outside and encourage local use of resources and ownership,” explained Navy. “Our staff and local partners [were encouraged to spend significant time in] the communities to build close relationships [based on] respect and understanding.”

We have many reasons to celebrate the work accomplished in Cambodia. Yet even as we overcome some of the biggest challenges, other obstacles to development are surfacing. Migration is a pressing issue in our communities. Disasters and lack of employment has sent many young families away from the villages and into big cities or neighboring countries to find work. With fewer human resources, our church partners are feeling the biggest strain from lack of financial and manual support to continue their work.

☪ Since 1996, World Renew Cambodia has supported 25,000 participants to improve their health through construction of latrines, improving access to clean water, and improving nutrition and hygiene.



World Renew Cambodia has helped to strengthen inclusive education in Cambodia through construction of 15 kindergartens, support to 38 Parent Teacher Associations, support to 25 adult literacy groups and training of over 100 teachers.

World Renew Cambodia has known many challenges and blessings over the past 20 years. If you ask any World Renew staff person to describe our team, the word “family” will be used most often. Over the course of 20 years, the staff has developed strong bonds. Their knowledge and skills have grown. The relationships we have built in our office are a model to our partners and communities. We can show the love of God through our own relationships and actions.



Prayers for Cambodia

- Praise for the relationship World Renew has developed with the Cambodian Government over the past 20 years. We give thanks for the close partnership that we have forged with the Ministry of Rural Development. We celebrate the good relationships that are growing among our community members and local government.
- Praise for the growth in democracy, transparency, and accountability in the region and in Cambodia over the past 20 years. We are encouraged by the first openly contested elections in Myanmar since 1900. These elections gave the National League for Democracy an absolute majority in both houses of parliament. We give thanks that the voice of the people of Myanmar has been heard. We pray that this open and fair election, conducted with very little violence, may be a sign of hope for Cambodia’s next election scheduled for 2018.
- Thanks for the steady improvements we have experienced in our work with churches in Cambodia since the inception of our Christian learning network in 2003. We are grateful for all 32 members of this network and the way they are learning together and supporting each other while bringing the love of Jesus to rural communities. We give thanks for the achievements of the eight rural churches with whom World Renew has partnered to implement the community organizing process in 32 rural communities.
- We lift up World Renew Cambodia’s wonderful staff and partners. We are grateful that they are growing daily and that the bonds that unite them are strong.
- We pray for guidance and understanding of God’s will for our work in the future. Help us to understand how to address issues such as migration away from rural communities; a large youth population with few employment opportunities; and climate change with increased drought and floods, which threaten agricultural production.



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