



Empowering families and children to effect lasting change... community by community

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Fighting the "Mystery Disease"

Threatening Cambodian Children!

Dear Supporters,

Many of you know already, from worldwide news reports, that what was labeled a "mystery disease" has spread concern around the world about the children in Cambodia. For several weeks or months, the disease was not understood, and there was concern that it could be the start of a major epidemic. As of the date of this newsletter, the syndrome has affected at least 61 children in Cambodia, and tragically 54 have died. An active investigation into the disease has been underway, led by the Cambodia Ministry of Health (MoH), in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), and other partners. Recent recommendations on hygiene practices, including handwashing, seem to be effective in significantly reducing transmission of the pathogens involved, and the implementation of new treatment recommendations are apparently being effective in saving children's lives. Sustainable Cambodia is actively assisting the village families and schools in the areas where we work in implementing these procedures.

The age of the cases range from 3 months to 11 years old, but the majority are under 3 years old, with roughly a third more boys affected than girls. The cases have come from 14 different provinces, and there were no signs that the disease was infecting other children once the children were brought to the hospital.

When the unexplained deaths were first noted at the Kantha Bopha Hospitals, laboratory samples were not available since most of the children had died. Based on the latest laboratory results, however, health officials have determined that a significant proportion of the samples tested positive for Enterovirus 71 (EV-71), which causes hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD). EV-71 has been known to generally cause severe complications among some patients.

Additionally, a number of other pathogens, including dengue and Streptococcus suis were identified in some of the samples. The samples were found negative for H5NI and other influenza viruses, SARS and Nipah.

"Further investigation is ongoing and this includes the matching of the laboratory and epidemiological information. We hope to be able to conclude our investigation in the coming days", said **H.E BunHeng**, Minister of Health.

WHO partners, which include Institut Pasteur du Cambodge and US Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, are assisting the MoH with the situation. They are focusing on hospitalized cases, and early warning surveillance data, as well as laboratory and field investigations.

*Sustainable Cambodia is a nonprofit organization working to help the residents of Cambodian villages create a sustainable quality of life. We do not simply give aid to the villagers. Instead, we help them build wells, irrigation systems and schools, and train them in agriculture and vocations, empowering and enabling them to create positive and measurable change in their villages. Sustainable Cambodia is registered in Cambodia as a Non-Governmental Organization with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the United States as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization. TIN# 20-0175973
Please visit our website at www.SustainableCambodia.org*



The WHO and MoH are recommending proper hygiene practices to prevent HFMD transmission, and that children who are thought to be sick be brought to a hospital facility and not treated with steroids. Initial analysis seems to point to vulnerability of children who were treated with steroids for disease symptoms, where the steroids suppressed the immune system, and the combination resulted in death. Children who are brought to the hospital without treatment by steroids have a near-100% survival rate.

For more information on hand, foot and mouth disease please [Click here](#).

Read on to find out more...

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SC helps families fight the disease

Since we heard the announcement from the Ministry of Health about the unknown disease in Cambodia, SC has moved at high speed to help. Everyone at SC has been working hard to spread the important message about how to protect children from this threat as much as possible. An SC team has visited every village where we work, with pictures and flyers, presenting information to our students and the village families about how to protect the children from the disease and what to do if disease strikes.



Every school in our education program has conducted a training on the issue, including information on what is known about the disease, how to protect yourself from infection through proper hygiene, and how to get support when they have found someone in their communities that might be infected.



Our health care staff and our community development staff in cooperation with the Rotary 3H team have been working with all the community committees and village families to spread the information during other SC activities like the day-trainings and night-show trainings.





The good news is that families in the communities have been practicing the knowledge they gained from the training to prevent the disease.



Through these outreach efforts, village families recognized symptoms of the disease in six children. SC has helped send these children to the hospital in Phnom Penh on time, per WHO recommendations.

All six children have been treated and are back home with their families. One child, though he is allowed to come home with some medicines, will remain under the monitoring of the Kantha Bopha Hospital for six months.

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Rural areas face lower levels of education, economic opportunity and resources. Help communities access the skills and resources they need to succeed. Learn more...

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Give hope to children in rural Cambodia! By sponsoring a child in personal & school life, you give them a chance for a brighter future! Learn more...

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Thanks to Supporters!

Many thanks to all of our supporters!



Special thanks to our child sponsors, and community development support from Sustainable Cambodia Australia and Rotarians from all over the world. Without you, this would not be possible!

Sustainable Cambodia (SC) is an internationally supported grass-roots not-for-profit organization, led by dedicated Cambodian staff with help from international volunteers, and with support from child sponsors and Rotary Clubs from all over the world.

SC works with rural Cambodian villages to help them achieve sustainability and self-sufficiency. Sustainable Cambodia was co-founded by Rotarians, and active Rotarians make up a majority of Sustainable Cambodia's governing Board of Directors. SC aligns its values with those of Rotary International, including RI's ideals of empowerment, peace through understanding, world service and community service. We apply Rotary's effective "Four-Way Test" to ethical issues. Our model is unique in several ways:

- Only native Cambodians are employed as paid staff, and all international officers, directors and consultants are unpaid volunteers, ensuring that 100% of funding goes directly into the rural village programs.
- We are an empowerment organization rather than an "Aid" organization. We provide resources, assistance, training and education to the community, empowering families to revitalize their community and economy.
- Our approach is broad-based, including schooling for children, safe village drinking water, irrigation systems, alternative agriculture, vocational education, micro-business and healthcare.
- In return for the assistance, each family commits to helping surrounding villages: We not only "teach them how to fish," but teach them to teach others how to fish.

While we currently work in central Cambodia, our vision is for this empowerment model to spread across Cambodia, and ultimately to grow into other countries.