

Cambodia Corps Update

Summer 2023

We begin our update with sad and frustrating news. There was an attack on 11 June 23 by an unknown group in Viet Nam, Dak Lak province at two commune offices. It was assumed by Montagnard dissidents. Communist officials immediately responded with overwhelming force, arresting at least ninety Montagnards on suspicion of involvement. Christian Montagnards are fearing government reprisals will soon be directed at them.

It continues to be a frustrating situation to see our loyal allies subjected to communist oppression while our government seemingly stands by. They are being denied basic human rights simply because of their past loyalty to the US. Our mission remains as important today as when we began in 1999. "To help the Montagnard help themselves through education".

On a much more positive note, our first trip back since the pandemic was the best yet. Our two star students, Munny and Leap, who have parlayed their volunteer work into representing the Indigenous People of northeast Cambodia in two international conferences, continue to set the pace for our other students. To begin with, all your students are motivated and hard working thanks to our careful screening and selection, but these students, seeing one of their own accomplish even more has set a new standard for the kids. We look for more volunteerism to soon follow. As we were departing for home, Leap was notified that she had been selected to join the United States Ambassador's Youth Advisory Council. Yet another accolade. To top that off, last week Leap was notified she was being sponsored to attend the Asian Undergraduate Symposium in Singapore. This program, your program, of scholarship education to help our Montagnard friends that you all have so generously supported is making a real difference. Thank you.



Max, Carol, Munny



Leap and Ambassador Murphy

And last, but not least, CCI was contacted by Wildlife Conservation Society, a worldwide organization. They are involved in administering and protecting a huge sanctuary in eastern Cambodia (660,000 ha or 1,452,000 acres) Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary, on the border, opposite Tay Nin province in Viet Nam. There are some twenty Montagnard hamlets and villages within the sanctuary. WCS is experiencing problems of illegal logging, poaching and mining. Often the criminals recruit the Indigenous People as laborers to help them. To counteract this, WCS has decided upon a program of education for the sanctuary inhabitants, to teach them to help protect the forest they live in and depend upon.

Due to CCI's success in educating and placing our students in jobs which benefit their community, WCS approached us seeking a proposal for a similar program tailored to their situation. We have agreed on a partnership in which we will use our format of screening and selection as well as written commitments from poor but capable students who will then return to their communities and use their education to benefit their people. We will continue to emphasize the fields of education and health care for the WCS students, but also promote ecology, environmental studies, forest management, sustained development and ecotourism. WCS will directly support the students from the sanctuary. There will be no cost to CCI, but rather our manager will now have a paid part-time student assistant to help administer the additional workload.

This is a win-win situation. Our program gains five more college level students who will pledge to return to their community upon graduation, our effective reach will extend into new territory creating more role models for the Montagnard people and we continue to give back to our loyal friends who supported us so long ago (although it still seems like yesterday).

Remember Mike Benge's words, "If it were not for the Montagnard supporting us there would be many more names on that black granite wall in DC"

On behalf of your students, myself, Carol, Rich and Lewis, thank you.

Michael "Max" Lund

President, CCI