

## The Horsford Diaries Part 1



*During their vacation in Southeast Asia, David and Debby Horsford are combining sightseeing with visits to areas where TPRF is helping people through its various partners. Debby is writing a diary and David takes photos and videos of their journey. This is the first article in a series featuring the humanitarian work of TPRF grantee and partner, the Sao Sary Foundation.*

The [Sao Sary](#) Foundation is located in the Kampong Speu Province of Cambodia, about a two hour drive from the capital, Phnom Penh. This mountainous area rarely gets enough rainfall to provide drinking water, let alone enough to grow crops and raise animals.

Sao Sary, a government worker from the province, was tragically murdered for the humanitarian work he undertook to help villagers in this area. Sao's son, Vichetr Uon, created the foundation to

continue his father's work. The enemies Vichetr deals with are loan sharks and prostitution groups who prey upon the innocent people in these impoverished villages.

TPRF has partnered with the Sao Sary Foundation to build clean water wells in an organized effort to bring dignity and self-sufficiency to these extremely marginalized Cambodians.



Most children in this province receive a poor quality of education and are forced to give up school completely by the time they are 13 years old. Many parents force their daughters to forge their documents, saying they are women of working age, in order to work in garment factories and provide financial support for their families.

The older women left in the village care for the children and are given the task of traveling long distances to buy water. They are often charged unfairly for the drinking water they buy. Most of the men and older boys are forced to work on fishing boats in Thailand, where they are exploited and often forced to work without pay.

The day we arrive, a work crew is here with equipment to drill more than 30 meters through solid rock to reach water. The cost of this operation is high because it requires many attempts to find water and there is always equipment breakage.

TPRF has provided water filtration systems so that the water gathered in the nearby pond can be cleaned. Until recently, this pond was the only source of water the villagers had, and it dries up months before the rainy season begins.



As many villagers gather to watch the drilling of the well, Vichetr calls a village meeting. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to ask them questions and, of course, for them to ask us questions. A woman's face lights up as she hears the translation after David asks if the clean water has made a difference in the villagers' lives. In unison, they all chant, "Yes."

Sanitation conditions are so improved, and with the new well going in, the people here are hopeful for even bigger changes. Time and money will no longer be wasted traveling long distances to buy water.

The villagers are eager to use the well water to start irrigating their land to grow vegetables that they can eat and perhaps even sell in the market.

There is one grandmother here who is raising five grandchildren. The mother died and the father, unable to support the family in any way, abandoned the children. The grandmother is pictured with short, cropped hair. The three daughters are in the photos also, with brightly colored skirts given to them by a Vietnamese doctor. The children hold out their skirts proudly to show us.



They now have clean drinking water, recently in unknown luxury. With the well, they have a way to

begin to grow vegetables, raise animals, and become self-sufficient. No longer having to borrow money to buy rice, the family will be free of loan sharks.

The grandmother sees that her grandchildren will have an opportunity to stay in school and end the cycle of poverty that has trapped families in this area for untold generations.

*Photos by David Horsford*

