

## The Khmer of Cambodia

### **The People Group**

Cambodia is the second poorest South East Asian country, with 80% of the 15 million Khmer people living in rural regions, primarily as subsistence farmers. Nearly three decades of war and genocide have left the nation broken and economically stagnant, with the resulting population being predominantly under 30 years of age. However, this emerging youthful generation is beginning to engage with the modern world and as a result is finding a voice as it seeks to construct a better future.

Today the Khmer people hold to a culturally Buddhist worldview but within that remains many animistic beliefs that influence their daily life. Less than 1% of the population profess to follow Jesus and those that do live with a constant tension of maintaining traditional responsibilities to their parents along with being influenced by a rising Western influence.

### **Global Interaction team among the Khmer**

The Khmer cross-cultural team live and minister in the North-West region of Cambodia. While the country of Cambodia is experiencing rapid change, it still grapples with issues of poor health, low literacy rates and high underemployment. The sports ministry, which the team began, is growing and providing valuable opportunities to build relationships with Khmer coaches, players and families. The team also spend time visiting nearby rural areas where many have never heard the message of Jesus. The team is building strong friendships with people in these rural villages. They are increasingly being able to share their faith and some have chosen to follow Jesus.

Excitingly, the team will grow rapidly this year as a number of new families arrive and begin culture and language learning.

### **Prayer Needs**

- God's Spirit to be prompting Khmer people to seek an understanding of Jesus and God's plan for humanity
- The team's visits to rural villages will deepen connections and open opportunities to share faith
- Bible studies with Khmer tennis coaches would spark deep spiritual conversations
- Strong partnership teams to form to support the candidates preparing to serve with the team

### **Pray for the Team Members**

Andy and Cathie (candidates)

Catherine

Craig and Kim

Luke and Rachel

Rob and Deb

Scott and Janelle

Tristan and Megan

## Stories of Hope from Cambodia

### **On the Journey**

For just over 2 years, team member Scott and a Khmer friend and follower of Jesus, have been travelling along a northern road. On these journeys, opportunities naturally arise to connect with people. In God's timing both have found ways to share the Gospel. Mr D, a father who lives about 1 hour's drive away has deeply engaged with these conversations and over time has received Jesus. Scott has been discipling him and rejoices in Mr D's witness to others.

As God works through Mr D his faith is clearly evident as he shares the living God. The Khmer worldview is very spiritual and Scott is often 'awestruck' by Mr D's response to the Holy Spirit during their prayers. Please pray for Mr D and his family and give thanks for Scott's faithfulness.

### **Where is the Grass Greener?**

While grass around homes is a common choice in Australia, it is very rare in Cambodia and many Khmer remove every blade of grass near their home. This meant that Rob and Deb's decision to grow a lawn, prompted much discussion and interest from their neighbours.

Deb and Rob have been living in Cambodia since the end of 2016 and know that, unlike the rapid growing tropical grass, relationships take time to grow. In Cambodia, there are added cultural layers such as 'saving face' and the giving of respect and honour that Rob and Deb have encountered as they interact with Khmer people. Often they are given, and expected to use, the best chairs in the room while others are sitting on the floor. As westerners, there are cultural expectations on them and the relationship can shift into that of a client and patron. In order to grow meaningful relationships, Deb and Rob must navigate this dynamic. Praise God that as they dedicate time to developing their cultural understanding and language skills, these complex dynamics are becoming easier to navigate.

Deep relationships take time and intentional investment to build patterns of trust and understanding. While sometimes it's easy to think the grass is greener on the other side, it doesn't take much experience to learn that the grass is greener where you water, fertilise and nurture it. Pray for Rob and Deb as, day by day, they seek to grow and nurture deep relationships within their community.

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