

This document aims to provide an update on the epidemic situation since the beginning of the year 2021 in Cambodia and its impact on Krousar Thmey's beneficiaries and activities.

The month of January was calm and saw the reopening of schools nationwide and a certain return to normalcy. Despite this, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians working in the tourism sector or the textile industry remain in a precarious situation, having lost their jobs in the previous months. The socio-economic situation of the country is thus particularly fragile.

Mid-February, the epidemic resurfaced, particularly in Phnom Penh, causing the closure of schools in the capital, as well as in the provinces of Kandal and Sihanoukville. Mid-March, as infections had spread to other provinces, schools throughout the country were closed. On April 7, inter-regional travel was banned and tourist sites closed in an attempt to contain the virus. A curfew from 8pm to 5am was then put into place in several localities (Phnom Penh, Kampong Speu, Banteay Meanchey, Tboung Khmum, Siem Reap and Ksach Kandal district in Kandal province). The number of staff present in the offices of companies and public institutions was limited to 2%. On April 11, all restaurants and bars in Phnom Penh were closed to the public. The municipality also banned all sales of alcohol. Finally, on April 15, the Cambodian authorities decided to put the territory of Phnom Penh city and the commune of Takhmao under lockdown. All public markets in these areas were closed and residents were ordered to stay at home and only go out twice a week maximum for food shopping. This strict three-week lockdown gave way to a division of the territory into three different zones: red, orange and yellow. The inhabitants of the red zones are forbidden to leave their homes. Those in the orange zones can go out to buy food and for other exceptions, including medical appointments. Finally, yellow-zone residents can travel normally, outside of curfew hours, and some businesses have been able to reopen. This zoning system has also been extended to other territories such as, among others, some areas of the city of Poïpet, the province of Sihanoukville and the province of Kandal.

Currently (as of May 10, 2021), the country has 19,743 Covid-19 cases, with 11,790 active cases, and counts 126 deaths. At the end of January, the total number of officially registered Covid-19 cases was 465. A vaccination plan has been implemented with the goal of vaccinating the entire population of Phnom Penh, and at least 80% of the total population of Cambodia. Since February 10, 1,773,994 people have been vaccinated nationwide.

The health situation and the measures put in place by the government have strongly affected Krousar Thmey's activities.

For the Child Welfare program:

- Since March, the follow-up of the children and families supported as outside cases by our social workers is being done by telephone.
- The outreach sessions had to be stopped first in Phnom Penh in mid-February, then in Poïpet from mid-April.
- The temporary protection centers are no longer welcoming new children.
- The activities of the Academic and Career Counseling project, implemented by the project officer, are reduced to giving support over the phone as well.
- All children in the different protection centers and family houses are currently studying remotely. As was the case in 2020, this means that the social workers in the centers and the parents in the family houses help with homework and lessons. They also pick up materials, lessons, and homework from the schools (except during lockdown). The children continue to take turns using the computers in the centers, and they follow the remote learning program set up by the Ministry of Education on the dedicated Cambodian television channel.

- Since the closure of all schools, Krousar Thmey's staff have been organizing a wide range of activities in all our structures to keep the children busy and calm.

- All centers and family houses went into lockdown during the mandatory three weeks, except for Kampong Cham family house. The members of the staff quarantined themselves with the children in the centers. The centers in Poïpet, Chamkar Mon and Takhmao and the family house in Kpop Veng are still in the red zone and therefore continue to be under strict lockdown, while the long-term protection center and the two family houses in Siem Reap are no longer under lockdown but continue to be very vigilant.

- Thanks to the 3PC network, which Krousar Thmey is part of, psychological support with professionals from a partner NGO is available free of charge by telephone for all members of the child welfare program team and its beneficiaries.

- Some of the families of the children in our centers and of those followed-up as outside case have lost their jobs due to the epidemic and are facing real economic difficulties, as is the case for many Cambodians in general. Krousar Thmey has therefore decided to provide exceptional financial support to these families, support that will be delivered in the form of a money transfer to give them the freedom to spend it according to their most urgent needs.

- The Health Advisor keeps regular contact with the health referents of each structure, updating them whenever there is a change in health measures. He also coordinates the vaccination against Covid-19 of the staff. As of today, 22 team members have received their first injection. The health referents continue to monitor the mental and physical health of the children on a daily basis.

For the Education of Deaf or Blind Children program:

- The five special schools, like all schools in Cambodia, are currently closed and the majority of the program's activities are on pause, except for the activities that can be conducted online.

- The Education Program Manager makes sure that the Coordinator of the Academic and Career Counseling project at the National Institute for Special Education follows-up closely with the deaf or blind youth studying at university. She facilitates their access to online courses and ensures that they receive adequate support and attention from their professors.

For the Cultural and Artistic Development Program:

- The dance and music teachers at Serey Sophon's School of Khmer Arts and Culture provide online classes. All teachers, including the drawing teacher, are attempting to record and edit video lessons that will be made available to the school's students.

- Despite these efforts, the number of students currently taking classes has dropped significantly.

- No artistic performances are possible at this time.

Krousar Thmey would like to thank you again for your support, understanding and flexibility during these exceptional and uncertain times. It is thanks to you that we can adapt our actions to the most urgent needs and ensure continuity in the help we provide. This is now more important than ever.