



## **Program Snapshot**

### **M'Lop Tapang's Outreach / Construction Team**

M'Lop Tapang's Outreach Team works directly in the local community with children and families where they live. Social workers from the Outreach Team offer a wide range of family support services, from more practical interventions like training, helping to start small businesses to generate additional income, making urgent home repairs, and providing emergency food assistance to more psycho-social support services like counseling, boosting confidence, teaching effective parenting techniques, alcohol and drug support services, and relationship problem-solving. These Outreach workers are very often the first point of contact with families needing help.

A small group of five social workers embedded in the Outreach Team works specifically with families working and living on construction sites.

Sihanoukville is still developing and growing. There are construction projects underway across the city, though not to the magnitude experienced here during the large-scale casino/hotel construction boom witnessed in 2019/2020. These construction projects continue to attract migrants from rural areas looking for work as laborers. It is not uncommon for these unskilled, often uneducated or illiterate migrant workers to temporarily move here with their families.

Laborer work is difficult and physically taxing, but for many, it is their only way to earn a living. A day's wage for an unskilled male laborer is roughly 50,000 Cambodian Riel (\$12.5 USD). A female employee earns less per day, roughly 40,000 Cambodian Riel (\$10 USD). These workers are not paid if they do not work or if construction is interrupted due to weather or other factors. If the workers are hurt, they have no health insurance or medical coverage. Sadly, a common complaint



among workers is that they are frequently not paid on time and that their salary is frequently delayed.

Migrant laborers and their families frequently live on or near the building sites for which they work. The number of families living in these 'camps' varies depending on the scale of the project and might range from 10 to 80 households. Families typically live in these places for six to twelve months, depending on the scale of the project. When one job is finished, the family relocates in the hopes of finding work on another construction project.

The living conditions at these sites are, at best, rudimentary. Workers and their families are most commonly seen living in modest shelters created from leftover and abandoned additional building materials from construction sites, with walls made of sheets of plywood and roofing made of plastic tarps. Families may be supplied with tiny rooms in concrete-block row housing for larger construction projects. Each construction site will have a single toilet facility shared by all households, as well as a common non-potable water source. Children living with their parents in these locations are frequently malnourished and vulnerable to health issues such as water-borne illnesses, skin infections, and trauma. There is also a lack of access to educational opportunities and safe play locations for the children living in these places.

M'Lop Tapang's construction site social workers travel every day to visit with families living at these sites. They provide information to families new to the area on what services are available through our organization and assist with referrals to other program teams. As well, they follow up with families previously met to provide continued support and monitoring. This small group of Outreach social workers is truly making a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and their families.

So far, just in the first six months of 2023, with the assistance of our construction site team:

- **48** children who were not going to school before have started attending non-formal education classes at M'Lop Tapang's Education Center
- Another **33** children have been able to continue learning at local public schools with the support of M'Lop Tapang's "Back to School" program
- **114** children received medical care from MT doctors and nurses
- **134** families received emergency food support
- **3** families were referred to MT's Child Protection team for services
- **2** youths referred to MT's vocational training programs



*MT social workers meet with construction working families to inform about available services*



*Ching, one of the MT social workers, meets with families at a local construction site*