



CAMBODIA

SIEM REAP

PROJECT
(24)

Nearly five million tourists visit Siem Reap annually – best known for the mysterious Angor Wat temple ruins and the UNESCO World Heritage Tonlé Sap Lake. But just beyond these iconic destinations lies a population of nearly 900,000 that faces economic challenges and water-related health concerns that creates a continuous cycle of poverty, sickness and death.

Waterborne diseases are unnecessarily transmitted and children in the area are absent from school because of poor hygiene knowledge and practices. Stuningly, 95 percent of rural schools do not have access to clean water and electricity, and students drink untreated water if it looks clear enough to drink.

Most rural families walk at least 200 meters each way to collect water from streams, rivers, ponds and dams. Water they bring back home is polluted with bacteria, protozoa, pathogens or viruses and poses a health risk for consumption. Families are aware of the situation but cannot afford bottled water or lack access to filtration systems at home or nearby community centers. Forty-five percent of the population lives below the poverty line with earnings of less than 80 cents (USD) per day and only 35 percent have access to electricity.

Safe, clean drinking water is available in plastic bottles for rural families living near the Tonlé Sap Lake – only if they can afford to buy it.

Children, typically young girls like “Sue”, are responsible for collecting water which, at a distance of more than 200 meters each way, keeps her away from school. Diarrhea and other waterborne illnesses are responsible for children missing school and threatens economic advancement.

