

Light of Mercy Home Cambodia



Children at LMH enjoy time with each other, living together in a supportive, learning environment

Country Context

The population of Cambodia is 16.5 million people. Many of those who survived decades of conflict have been plunged into poverty with 12.9% of the population living below the national poverty line¹.

Roughly 90% of those living in poverty are in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Productivity is often low, and two thirds of the country's 1.6 million rural households face seasonal food shortages each year.

Cambodia has experienced economic growth over the last decade—with a strong dependence on tourism, garment manufacturing, construction and real estate, and agriculture sectors. Still, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in Asia.

People living with disabilities in Cambodia face discrimination and are more likely to experience extreme poverty. Rates of disability among children aged 5-14 years in Cambodia ranges from 2% in some provinces up to 20% in others. Children with disabilities are often neglected and miss out on specialised opportunities for education and learning life skills. They remain at home, alone, while their parents go out to work.

The Jesuits have a long history of working in Cambodia dating back to the 1980s in refugee camps. Today, there are 29 international Jesuit Priests, Brothers and Scholastics missioned to Cambodia and one young Cambodian Jesuit. The Jesuit works are diverse including education, health, disability, agriculture, ecology and development programs.

About the project

Light of Mercy Home (LMH) in Phnom Penh is a home and centre for children with disabilities where they can receive education and live in a community together with other children facing similar challenges. The Light of Mercy Home's focuses on children with disabilities who are poor and have never been to school.

LMH aims to enable children with disabilities to lead a life with dignity and be recognised as full participants in Cambodian society. The project focuses on giving each child the possibility of living independently when he/she becomes an adult and promotes acceptance of their disability as a positive aspect of their identity.

During 2023, the Home aims to provide full time care and accommodation for 22 children and youth (13 female) aged nine to 18 years.

Jesuit Mission partners with Jesuit Service Cambodia to implement this project.

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Key Project Activities include:

¹<https://www.adb.org/search?keywords=SOCIAL%20IMPACT%20ASSESSMENT&page=1&source=suggest>

- **Accommodation and daily care:** children and youth living at LMH receive essential care and necessities to ensure their health and wellbeing needs are met.
- **Schooling:** The majority of children living at LMH attend nearby public schools where they receive special education. For the few children who cannot receive the education they need through public schools access education within LMH. Additionally, LMH provides school materials and transportation to school.
- **Skills development:** Besides formal education, LMH encourages individual talents and interests through extra-curricular classes such as computer skills, music, dancing, gardening and simple craft skills, depending on each individual's abilities and interest. Sign language and English classes are also held.

The children are supported to learn life skills including health awareness on hygiene and a range of common illnesses. This knowledge contributes to the children being able to live more independently as adults.



Counting and numeracy skills form part of the school curriculum that the children at LMH follow

Project outcomes and measures

The overall goal of the project is to support children with disabilities (CWDs) to live a healthier and more self-reliant life.

This is broken down into the key objectives with measurable indicators to assess outcomes and impact.

Key Objective	Measurable indicators
CWDs at LMH enjoy a safer and healthier daily life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children at LMH are provided with safe accommodation, daily meals and essential care. Children have skills in hygiene and care to live a healthier life.
CWDs at LMH build the necessary knowledge and skills to live a more self-reliant daily life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWDs completed skills training based on their interests, within or outside of LMH. Level of formal curriculum completed by CWDs at LMH. Progress and produce from LMH gardening activities.

LMH staff measure the individual progress of children in their care as well as implementing the project activities. Children are supported to improve their knowledge and skills in formal schooling and in extracurricular and life skills activities. Jesuit Mission Australia staff review regular written and financial reporting from LMH; attend regular update meetings (remotely) and monitoring visits when possible, and provide advice on a range of project management, monitoring and evaluation areas.

Budget

In 2023, the planned funding for this project is \$27,000 inclusive of Jesuit Mission Australia Administration costs (10%). The partner budget has been converted from USD at 0.62

Potential for Pilgrims 100 members to visit

LMH welcomes visitors and is able to arrange for groups to visit the Home to meet students and staff and understand more about the importance of this facility.

Hear their Stories

Srey Christa

16-year-old Srey Christa was born in a small, remote village. As a child living with blindness, it wasn't until he found out about the Light of Mercy Home that he discovered it was possible for him to go to school.

"In my village there are no schools for blind people. I felt so disappointed and so hopeless. I thought maybe my life had no light and no future.

My parents decided to take me to stay at Light of Mercy Home. I could then go to school and live with many disability children. We lived together like a family. We learned, we played, and we grow together.



Life in Light of Mercy Home has helped me to grow in so many ways. I can study music, Computer, English, and general education. Now I'm studying at grade 5. I have a dream. My dream is to be a good teacher for all students.

Finally I hope that Light of Mercy Home gets more support to continue helping children with disabilities."

¹ UNICEF (2018) A Statistical Profile of Child Protection in CAMBODIA