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Growing Together

Partnerships, People and the Communities We Serve

Dear BFT Friend

This edition is all about what happens when people come together — volunteers who travel far to learn alongside us, partners who bring new skills to our villages, and students who remind us every day why this work matters.

We hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful things growing across our communities, and as always, we love hearing from you.

Please read on, and as always, don't hesitate to reach out — your support and connection means the world to us and to the communities we serve.

Sincerely yours,

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From Policy to People - and Back Again

By Tallis Martin-Baker, Climate Adaptation Specialist and Volunteer

My name is Tallis Martin-Baker. I work in climate adaptation and have spent years working across the Pacific on climate change policy and community solutions. In May, I spent four weeks with BFT — and what I gained was every bit as much as what I gave.

I came to Siem Reap wanting to connect with people on the ground, not to sit in an office. BFT gave me exactly that. Together we integrated climate change education into BFT's existing WASH and waste training across schools and communities — building on frameworks already in place and adding the broader global picture: the worldwide plastic epidemic, why it matters for the environment, and the real health impacts of improper waste disposal.

What I found in the classrooms and villages exceeded my expectations. Students were already aware. Reusable water bottles sat on desks. The solutions students offered were grounded and practical — using lotus and banana leaves to wrap food, taking baskets to shops. The discussions were genuine and energetic, and the knowledge was already there. What I hope I brought was context: the scale of the problem beyond Cambodia, and the confidence that what they are already doing matters.

The barriers are real too. Not all schools have access to potable drinking water, which limits the ability to move away from bottled water entirely. BFT is working to address this by providing water filtration systems so every school has safe, accessible, plastic-free drinking water as standard.

I also had the privilege of joining BFT's partnership sessions with Engineers Without Borders alongside Programme Manager Sina, attending a groundbreaking ceremony for a new school building, and speaking with teachers about the realities of working in remote villages. The BFT staff and communities taught me as much as I taught anyone — about

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development looks like in practice.

Before leaving, I handed over all my lesson materials and visual aids to BFT staff and village teachers so they can continue running sessions independently. I hope it helps communities better manage plastic waste — for their local environment and for their health.

What I am taking back to my desk is less tangible but more lasting. The importance of working with people directly affected by environmental issues, not arriving with assumptions. Policy means little until it reaches the people it is written for — and in Cambodia, I was reminded of that every single day. The generosity and warmth of Cambodian communities — in classrooms, in villages and in homes — has left a mark I won't forget.

Bright Minds, Bright Futures



International Children's Day at BFT

Every year on 1 June, the world pauses to celebrate International Children's Day — a tradition that began in Geneva in 1925, born out of a global commitment to protect children from exploitation and give every child the chance to flourish. One hundred years on, that commitment lives on through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, reminding us that every child — regardless of where they are born — deserves love, protection and education.

At BFT, we didn't just mark the day. We celebrated it with an evening event at our centre that lit up with the talent, energy and brightness of the children we are so privileged to serve.

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the room alive with creativity and joy. Winners were celebrated at an Award Ceremony with trophies and prizes well earned, and in a proud milestone for our digital literacy programme, students who completed their computer training courses received their graduation certificates.

These children shone. Every performance, every certificate, every smile was a reminder of what is possible when children are given the space and support to grow.

Thank you to all the staff, volunteers and supporters who made this beautiful evening possible.

Where it Begins - BFT and Engineers Without Borders

Some of the most important days are the ones that don't look like much from the outside — a visit to a household farm, a conversation with a farmer, a shared walk through the land. This is where BFT's growing partnership with Engineers Without Borders is taking root.



Together with BFT Programme Manager Ly Sina and partner organisations, the team recently travelled to Chob Ta Trav Commune in Angkor Thom District to visit and monitor our agricultural project on the ground — observing progress, reviewing implementation activities, and listening to the community directly. It was the groundwork: a shared foundation of knowledge from which future workshops, training sessions and practical solutions will grow over the coming months and years.

What the day demonstrated was something BFT has always believed in — that sustainable agriculture and improved livelihoods are built through genuine collaboration between organisations and the communities they serve, not delivered from a distance.

Through our Smart Agriculture and Climate Change project, BFT and EWB are bringing their expertise together — EWB's technical knowledge and BFT's deep roots in the community — to develop climate adaptation solutions built from the ground up, not handed down.

This is just the beginning. We look forward to sharing more as this partnership takes shape.

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