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From Village Roots to the International Pitch

Twenty Years of Women and Girls Thriving

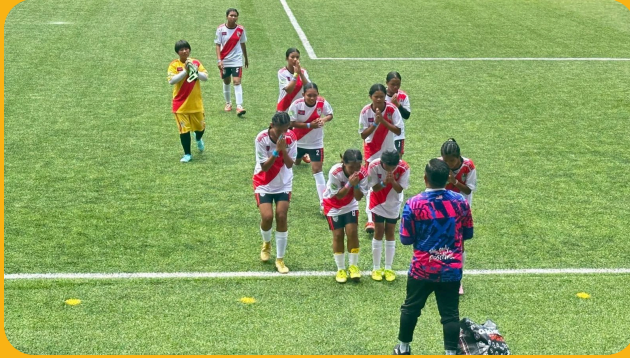
Dear BFT Friend

It's been a while getting our regular newsletters up and running and we appreciate your patience. The beginning of the year was so taken up with assisting our displaced people from the Thai-Cambodian border conflict and welcoming our guests who chose to travel anyway to honour twenty years of BFT with us.

As such, we thought it apt to kick off our newsletters with a focus on the achievements over the years of the women and girls we have helped empower, hoping they go on to carry our principles of peace, development and equality, allowing our communities to flourish.

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 Village to Singapore - Our Girls Take to the Field

This year brought a milestone moment for BFT — and for the girls who made it happen.

Through our long-term partnership with Happy Football Cambodia Australia, six players and two teachers from our rural communities joined a combined team for the JSSL 7s Tournament in Singapore, from 31 March to 6 April 2026.

The team brought together girls from two very different places. Three players and a teacher travelled from Oroong village, around 100km from Siem Reap — a long way from the bright lights of Singapore. Three more players and a teacher came from Sras Srong, just 8km from town but nestled in the heart of the Angkor Wat zone, where ancient temples are a daily backdrop. Joined by their dedicated coach Mr Sovatha — who watched his girls take the field with unmistakable pride — and four players and three staff from our Phnom Penh partner NGO CCF, the team competed together as one.

They played eight matches across three days. For the players and teachers from Siem Reap, this was their first time on a plane. The excitement was real — and so was everything that followed: the flight, the city, the competition, and the chance to see just how far they had already come.

Through our partnership with Happy Football Cambodia Australia we aim to give our girls more than a chance to compete. We want to give them a stage — to build their confidence, to stand alongside girls from other communities and countries, and to understand that where you come from does not define where you can go.

This isn't about the scoreboard. It's about the next generation learning to believe in themselves. And from what we saw in Singapore — they already do.

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A huge thank you to Happy Football Cambodia for making this possible, and to the teachers, families and communities who supported these remarkable young women.

A Life Transformed: Yee's Story

By Gill Gray

Friends of BFT Australia

Joining BFT's 20th anniversary Peace Gathering in January 2026, I was once again left feeling privileged and inspired. Nothing resonates more than being there — listening to stories of lives changed, and seeing the quiet pride of villagers in what they have built.



I made a return visit to Yee, now 57. She survived the Khmer Rouge as a young girl, losing her father and brothers. In the early 2000s, her husband left her in poverty with four children to raise alone. When BFT came to her village, they built her a water pump and provided microfinance and resources to start a fish farm and rebuild her house.

BFT's support went beyond the water pump and fish farm. Through the Peacebuilding Program, Yee found not just practical tools but a community around her. She became coordinator and cook for the village Children's Breakfast Program and a steady voice for neighbours wanting to start their own small businesses — someone who had walked the path and could show others the way.

That foundation held. Today Yee supplies surrounding villages with fish and sells hand-woven baskets to local businesses. During Covid, she diversified rather than collapsed — and now has several village women working alongside her. Her greatest gain, she says, is confidence.

Her eldest son was sponsored to represent Cambodia at the 2017 Homeless World Cup in Oslo. Her children are all independent adults. She has three grandchildren, still cares for her 86-year-old mother, and has plans for a rice farm and a tractor.

Because of BFT's helping hand, she told me, she is now strong.

Gill Gray has supported BFT for many years through Friends of BFT Australia.

Taking Root in Chub Romdeng

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We are delighted to share that our partnership with the Co:operaid Foundation, which

began late last year, has now moved into action — with our Chub Romdeng Village project officially underway as of March 2026, covering education, health and livelihoods.

Co:operaid is a Swiss Charitable Foundation committed to the rights of children to education.

This is a relationship we hope will grow and endure — because breaking the cycle of poverty in our communities takes time, commitment, and the kind of partnership that goes the distance.

Like Yee. Like the girls in Singapore. Like every village that has opened its doors to BFT over the past 20 year, in this our twentieth year we are just getting started.

Get Involved

For more information about our work, reach out to us at info@buildyourfuturetoday.org. If you would like to support BFT and the communities we serve, you can donate at buildyourfuturetoday.org/donate — every contribution makes a difference.



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