

Reflections March 2020 Hope with a Strategy

Contributors: Alma Thompson, ICCM Direct, Kaeli King, ICCM Advocate and Philip Phearak, ICCM Cambodia National Coordinator



In the mountains of Thailand, a young Burmese immigrant who frequently crossed the Thai border to find work, found refuge in a small house near the Lahu Village. Pregnant, unemployed, and recently abandoned yet again, she was at a loss.

When it came time to give birth, at the urging of her new neighbors, she reluctantly agreed to deliver at the hospital. Because she refused to sign the birth certificate, the Thai couple who accompanied her did so, becoming on paper the child's legal guardians.

The young mother stayed with her son, PhiChai (Pee-Ch-eye) for four years. When the "legal guardians" refused to take him in she left him to care for himself. The Thai couple, upon discovering him alone, dropped PhiChai at the doorstep of a nearby hostel they had heard about from friends.

In the last 6 months, since coming to this new role as ICCM Director, I've heard "this" story, and stories equally as dire, told over and over and over again. The specific details, the names, the locations, the reasons given, are different. But the hopeless story recycles itself, through our communities, through our nation and all around the world.



Photo above by Kaeli King



Yet **we** (you, I and ICCM) have **hope**.

We've heard this story. We recognize this as a severely broken, **and** poignantly fertile starting point.

We **see** the hope. Because we've **seen** the **hope**. And we are confident we **will see it again**, because our's is a "**Hope with a Strategy**"! The Strategy is to partner with Free Methodist World Missions around the globe, to Plant Transformational Churches and Develop Healthy Leaders. Ours is a **hope** that works!

PhiChai was found at the front gate of the ICCM Lahu Hostel by the church planter/pastor/hostel father. His story has barely begun. An ICCM sponsor is personally partnering with us, and together we all will watch as PhiChai is loved, safe and fulfilling his God-given potential.

We know this will happen because we've partnered in this story before. Philip, ICCM alum, Cambodia National Coordinator, overseeing ministry to 408 children (3 locations) writes, "In 2011, I began working in an official capacity with ICCM. I always encourage parents and children to finish their studies. In 2014 God blessed me when I married Daly. We have two children, David and Benjamin.

"I love the ICCM ministry. I love working with children **because it is the place that transformed my life to know God and His Love. I thank God for always having a plan for me.**"

Philip shares his story on page 2.



My father started an active business following the liberation of Cambodia (1979). Everyone called him a young millionaire. In 1981, he became ill and was no longer able to work. At that time my mother was unknowingly pregnant, with twins. She was troubled and worried, liquidating assets, pursuing every option to get treatment for my father. She looked for answers through a fortune teller.

The fortune teller declared, "You are going to have twins. They are very bad luck. They will come and destroy property and everything."

At the time of our birth, my brother and I were breech. The available doctor (medical excellence was severely depleted by the slaughter of Pol Pot's regime) gave our Grandmother the option to "save the mother or the babies." Our Grandmother said, "Keep the mother." But an excellent doctor (temporarily in Cambodia from France) overheard the situation and intervened to save us all.



My mother gave us to a childless Muslim family. Upon learning of this my aunt came to get us so we could live with her. Tragically, our father died when we were six months old.

Life with my aunt was difficult. Attendance at school was irregular. My brother and I went to the dump to pick up cans to help our aunt buy school supplies. Later, we moved to Prek Tie. There we fished in the lake for food. By the time I was 12 (around 6th grade), my aunt told me, "I can't pay for school anymore. You must find a job." Every night I cried. I didn't understand why my life was so hard.



I began visiting a church to study English, the lessons were free. One day, a missionary who had learned I had to quit school because we couldn't pay the school fees said, "God has a plan for you. He will help you get back to school."

I was so happy! I ran home with tears in my heart to tell my aunt, "God can help me."

She asked, "What is God?"

I replied, "Oh, I don't know, but I know He can help me."

I was enrolled in the ICCM program. I had my picture taken for sponsorship. Life began at the House of Love. I began to know God. I helped teach young children after school. I helped church plants in the far village by helping with the young children. I enjoyed serving God and telling everyone about Him.

Like Phillip: PhiChai, found a family, a community, and is getting an education through ICCM ministry work. Most importantly he knows God loves him unconditionally and will never abandon him. We believe God will work in PhiChai's life to heal the physical and emotional trauma he has experienced in his life.

We know what God has done for Phillip, God desires to do for **every child**. We dream of a world where it is so!

When you sponsor a child, you change a world.