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MISSION MOMENT: CAMBODIA

“Living in poverty was already hopeless, but life got harder when I lost my leg in a landmine accident,” Ouk Oy says. The 64-year-old father of four adult children lives with his wife, Sreng Kong, in western Cambodia.

Oy and Kong rely on her income as a seasonal wage laborer in order to make ends meet, earning about \$5 a day at a nearby corn farm. Through several local programs conducted by Church World Service, Oy and Kong have found new opportunities arising all around them. Oy said, “Before participating in a CWS program, my family didn’t have enough to eat. I borrowed rice or money to buy rice, and I worked as a wage laborer to repay the debt.”

He had dreams and plans for a more stable income for his family. Oy and Kong live on the grounds of a Trauma Care Foundation property. The couple doesn’t own land, so the Foundation allowed him to build a small home on their land. Oy also took a class on repairing motors through the Foundation, but he could never afford the costs of starting a business.

Working with the Khmer Community Development Association to reach families like Oy’s in this part of Cambodia, CWS helps families by providing education and resources to meet their basic needs through the Promoting Better Lives program. The program has helped with everything from building sanitary bathrooms to providing

business start-up grants, job training, and more. The program coordinators met with Oy and Kong to talk about their priorities, listening carefully to their hopes, dreams, and needs, to discern the best way to support them. Oy talked about his motor repair skills and his desire to start a business repairing motorbikes. With a \$350 start-up grant, he could buy tools and spare parts to get his shop going.

Today, not only do Oy and Kong have a much more stable income, but Oy has a renewed confidence and sense of purpose. “I am so happy and proud of myself; I never ever thought that I could afford to have my own business. I never expected this opportunity in my life, to run a service shop with a better and stable income,” he says. Oy now makes \$250-300 per month through the shop.

Week of Compassion gratefully serves with partners like Church World Service, and sees opportunity **RISE UP ANEW** for families like Oy and Kong. “I can’t thank you enough for the support, as I now have a certain job to support my family,” he said. “My wife doesn’t need to go out and sell her labor, we have enough to eat, and we can allocate some savings to expand my repair shop.”

