



CAMBODIA

ISF — Breaking poverty cycles with holistic education support



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Many poor youths in Cambodia must work to help the family rather than attend school. ISF is breaking this poverty cycle with a community-based Education Programme.

With funding from the Julius Baer Foundation, the NGO ISF is applying a holistic approach to education access in Cambodia. It enables kids from underserved families to catch up with peers and properly integrate back into Cambodia's public school system.

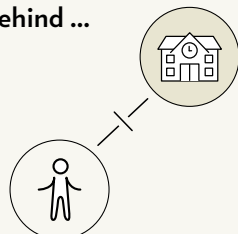
It runs two education centres in two of Phnom Penh's poorest urban communities, where families often survive by scavenging rubbish dumps, fishing, and earning as little as USD 2–3 per day. ISF's multi-pronged programme breaks down education barriers, making sure the kids and young people it serves have healthy meals, uniforms, school supplies, social support, recreation and more so they can properly focus on their studies. Every year, over 500 families apply to the Programme in hopes of enabling their children to achieve their fullest potential in Cambodia's state schools.

Quick facts

- Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- Project support: 2024–2026
- Grant amount: CHF 80,000 per year
- Implementing a community-based approach that considers all of young people's needs – from nutrition and transportation to school supplies and mentoring – to fulfil their education potential
- Goal: Enabling disadvantaged young people in Cambodia to complete their secondary schooling and go on to university or stable employment

From missing school and falling behind ...

In impoverished parts of Stung Meanchey and Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh, children as young as five miss school, or never even start, because they need to help out at home.



... to support in stabilizing and getting ahead.

With its Catch-up Education Programme, ISF gives tailored support to these kids and their families so they can make up missed lessons – whether maths, science, or Khmer language – and get back on track with peers in state schools.





“Before ISF, I had never been to school. My family is very poor and couldn’t send me. Since joining in 2022, I finally started going to school, playing football and studying many topics. Now I dream of becoming a teacher and a professional football player. Before ISF’s Catch-up Programme, I didn’t have any dreams. Now I have such a big one – I will study hard to make it come true.”

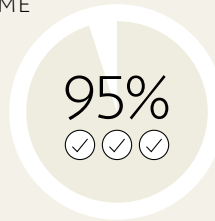
Panha*, 11 years old

OUTPUT



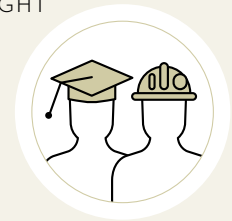
ISF’s Catch-up Programme currently supports 140 children aged 8–11 who quit school or never started, providing them with all necessary school materials, healthcare, meals, family support, and more.

OUTCOME



Over 95% of the students in the Catch-up Programme pass their exams and advance to the next grade. Once caught up, they can reintegrate into Cambodia’s public education system with peers their age.

HIGHLIGHT



Since 2006, **132 ISF students have found gainful employment** and can support themselves and their families. A total of **49 programme graduates are currently attending university** and dozens more are applying.

Removing barriers to education

- Extreme poverty and multiple disadvantages affect 49% of children in Cambodia, forcing many young people to leave school to work and support their family.
- Notably, only 5% of young people from the most disadvantaged families in Cambodia ever graduate from secondary school.
- Whilst public school in Cambodia is free to all, many children from impoverished families cannot afford the cost of school uniforms, books, bags and pens, school meals or transport to school.
- In collaboration with the Julius Baer Foundation, ISF’s Education Programme works to overcome barriers to education for some of the most vulnerable Cambodian children from disadvantaged communities.
- Children enrolled in ISF’s programme receive mentoring, free healthcare, two school meals a day, family food parcels and support, school supplies (pens, books, uniform, etc.), recreation activities, and more. This ensures that their families can afford to support their studies.
- Every year, ISF’s full Education Programme proudly supports 700 students through primary, secondary, and tertiary education in public schools, as well as employment. Through the services provided to students’ families, more than 3,400 additional people are supported.

About ISF

Founded in 2006, ISF is a Cambodian NGO that is dedicated to fighting poverty and inequality. ISF provides underprivileged children with access to education, healthcare, and sport. The programmes aid children who have dropped out or never attended school. ISF facilitates accelerated learning to help them catch up to the right grade and integrate in the local public-school system.



More information about ISF and its work in Cambodia: isfcambodia.org

Do you feel inspired by the ISF project and would like to support it?

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us! We would love an exchange.



Find out more about us and our projects online or write us at foundation@juliusbaer.com

Julius Baer Foundation

Established in 1965 by Walter J. Bär (1895–1970), the grant Foundation of Bank Julius Baer is focused on reducing wealth inequality. It convenes leading thinkers and actors on the topic and supports projects around the globe where the privileged and disadvantaged work together towards a world of equal opportunities.

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