

Prayer update March 2021

New localised outbreak of Covid and its effects.



The importance of following the rules of lockdown became very clear when on 20th February a number of visitors to the country left their quarantine hotel and went through the city visiting different night clubs and friends. Two of the party had tested positive for the disease and so were under strict rules. As a result, the positive record of low numbers of cases in the Kingdom over many months has now been spoilt. Up to 20th February, only 484 cases had been recorded and all dealt with. As of the writing of this update, that number has now shot to over 1000 cases and climbing, most connected to the 20th February local transmission.

With the announcement of a cluster of new cases, the government immediately moved into action, asking schools in the city of Phnom Penh and Kandal to close pending a further announcement. Also, the World Health Organization has weighed in after these new cases, urging all citizens of Cambodia to play their role in fighting this deadly disease.

The province of Preah Sihanouk, with its important commercial coastal port, has had a number of cases as a direct result of the 20th February localised transmission. The city is in lock-down, with people being asked to stay home and only ambulances and trucks transporting goods allowed to leave the city. The government are working hard to stop the spread of Covid as the Khmer New Year approaches next month. This week-long annual festival is enjoyed and celebrated by many Cambodians, including those who are considered migrant workers in neighbouring countries. The cities empty as families travel to the different provinces to celebrate and meet up with friends and family. This is a worrying factor, for the virus could easily be transmitted to other regions in the country.

The vaccine roll-out



On 4th March, Prime Minister Hun Sen and the first lady were given the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca jab in the capital city. The government have been in negotiations with both China and India to supply millions of doses. On the evening of 2nd March, 324,000 doses of the Astra-Zeneca S11 vaccine, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Global Vaccine Alliance, arrived at an almost deserted Phnom Penh International airport. The shipment of these 324,000 doses is the first batch, with another 1.1 million doses expected by the end of May.

The plan is to give the first injection to the most vulnerable, with those over 60 encouraged to visit the local health points set up to deliver the jab. Also, those hardest hit by the 20th February outbreak are offered the AstraZeneca vaccine. Government officials over the age of 60 are all encouraged to come forward.

The Health Ministry has reiterated that China's Sinopharm vaccine will be given to everyone in the 18 to 59 age group. It also encouraged all foreigners 18 years and older to get the vaccine, especially those on a mission in the country.

To date, 151,231 people in Cambodia have received at least the first shot of either the Sinopharm or AstraZeneca vaccine, of whom 50,324 are civilians and 100,907 are from the military. The really good news coming out of Cambodia is the announcement that the Covid-19 vaccines will be free to all the public, including foreign workers.

Please pray ...

- **Cambodia**
 - ... for the Cambodian government as they tackle the difficult task of curbing the spread of the virus
 - ... for wisdom and patience as the vaccines are rolled out around the country
 - ... against disinformation and fear spreading through the population concerning the vaccine.
- **Our team**
 - ... for those with school-age children, as schools are currently closed
 - ... for protection against infection as they work among the most vulnerable
 - ... for those of our team members currently separated from family soon to be reunited