

# The Phnom Penh Post



Mon Feb 02 2026 14:20:46 GMT + 0700 (Indochina Time)

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## From charity run to emergency lifeline, Sangker River Run displaced families

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# SPORT

Publication date  
01 February 2026 | 12:17  
ICT

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The Sangker River Run attracted runners from all over the world. Supplied

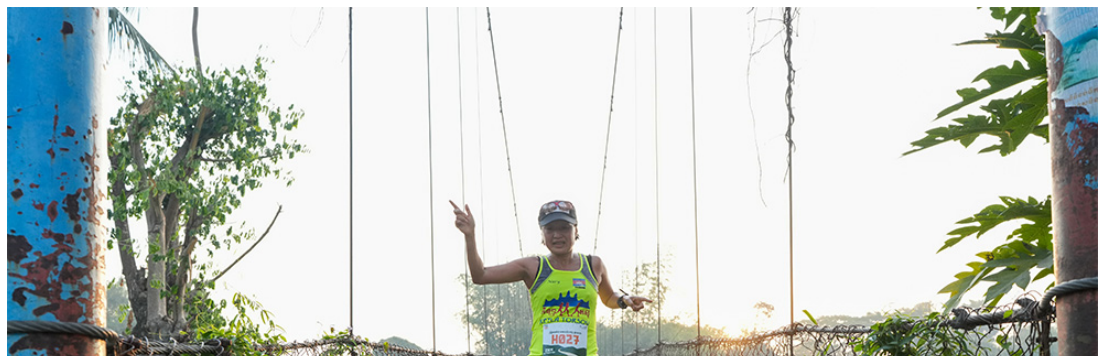
What began as a charity run to support arts education along the Sangker River has evolved into an urgent humanitarian response, as the Sangker River Charity Run 2026 was repurposed to assist the families displaced by the recent border crisis.

Held on January 25, the event drew more than 400 participants to the banks of the river in Battambang province, turning a community sport gathering into a coordinated fundraising effort for emergency relief.

Organisers said the shift in focus reflected the immediate needs of affected communities, many of whom were forced to seek temporary shelter in Battambang province.

“The situation demanded action, not symbolism,” said Osman Khawaja, executive director of Phare Ponleu Selpak, which co-organised the event.

“Sangker River Run is more than a race. It is a collective act of compassion. When people run, fundraise and stand together, they send a powerful message to children and families that they are not alone.”





This year's event aimed to raise funds for Cambodians displaced by the recent fighting at the border. Supplied

The run was marked by strong symbolic participation, underscoring the theme of resilience and solidarity.

Bishop Lokpok Kike and Cambodian Olympic marathoner Nary Ly, both of whom have personal histories of growing up in refugee camps, joined the race.

A defining moment came when Bishop Kike led a group of wheelchair users from La Paloma — survivors of landmines and past conflicts — along the course.

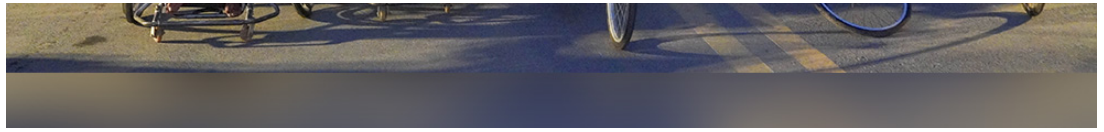
Their presence echoed the founding spirit of Phare, an organisation rooted in the belief that survival and recovery depend on courage and mutual protection.

Speaking at the event, Nary Ly said he hoped his participation would inspire Cambodians to support one another during difficult times.

“We all have a role to play in helping our communities heal,” he said.

Local residents and participants praised the organisers for redirecting the event toward humanitarian protection, noting that the run demonstrated how civic initiatives can respond quickly to crisis situations.





A number of wheelchair-bound landmine survivors also took part in the race. Supplied

Organisers described the feedback as overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the event's ability to blend sport, social responsibility and peacebuilding.

The success of the 2026 edition has reinforced the Sangker River Run's role as a platform for community healing in northwestern Cambodia.

Building on this momentum, Phare Ponleu Selpak announced that the next run will take place on January 24, 2027, with plans to further integrate art, heritage and sport to support vulnerable communities.

Unlike previous editions, participants were encouraged to create personal fundraising pages, ensuring that each kilometre run translated directly into assistance on the ground.

With financial backing from QMI Group, Grand Twins International and Vattanac Brewery Co., Ltd, the funds raised have already delivered a tangible outcome: the installation of a clean drinking water filtration system at the Khnach Romeas Pagoda displacement camp.

As Cambodia continues to grapple with the social impact of displacement, organisers say the message of this year's run is clear: when solidarity is translated into action, even a local race can become a lifeline.

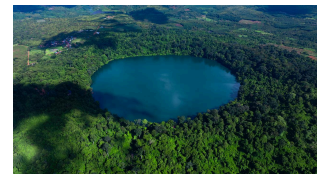


The event was such a success that plans are already underway for next year's race. Supplied

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