On the very 9th of November to 22nd November 2017, dental students from worldwide gathered at Prekijk Village, Cambodia for a collaborative project among International Association of Dental Students (IADS), Humble Smile Foundation, Bike 4 Cambodia and Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders.

This community program was initiated by the Humble Smile Foundation President, Dr. Darren Weiss serving one common goal “Prevention of Suffering caused by Oral Disease by Promoting Effective Oral Health Initiatives where Needs are Great”.

As we know oral health is fundamental to general health and well being. Poor oral health affects us in many ways as a result of pain, discomfort, tooth loss, absence from school & work. Despite numerous efforts seen to promote oral health awareness, time and time again, it fail due to barriers. The barriers which we are mentioning here are poverty, ignorance, inadequate financial resources, insufficient health workers and etc. All these factors pose a significant challenge to many countries, especially developing countries where its economics and health policy is in its transition period.

In this context, Cambodia is chosen for this very particular community project. Cambodia for many years faced with many sociopolitical issues which include widespread poverty, environmental destruction, high hunger rate. Despite the fact that, Cambodia is considered one of the few countries with low per capital income compared to its neighboring South East Asia Countries, Cambodia boosts to be one of the fastest economic growing country with an average of 6% GDP growth for the past decade with agricultural is the mainstay of its economy.

Cambodian population is known to have a high caries rate coupled with poor dietary habits and inaccessible oral health care facilities. Of the 450 Cambodian dentists available, most of them are not serving
Common dental problems like dental caries could be prevented by inexpensive methods which is based on nutrition, water fluoridation, dental service utilization. Dental health promotion create a favorable environment for the adoption of these healthy oral habits. The use of school as a platform for oral health care awareness is particularly beneficial as these activities could be incorporated into the existing curriculum seamlessly with the support of the staff to ensure proper implementation. The implementation of most community programs should not rely on its national body to be carried out. As such, there is a need of many community programs for promoting dental health among the disadvantaged populations in areas like Kompong Cham and Tbong Kmomm districts of Cambodia.

Cambodia Smile and Bike Program serves to reduce morbidity due to caries among vulnerable population in target region. Its core activities include

1. Improve sugar and acid intake habits among children
- obtain authorization to work in schools
- work with school teachers on appropriate food intake
- prepare training module & schedule for school kids
- Advocate MOH & MOE for policies and protocol implementation
- meet local community leaders to sensitize and explain oral health

2. Improve Plaque Control Measure Among School Children
- Introduce oral health care habits
- Sensitize school leaders and parents
- Toothbrush distribution (for 1 year) to school students
- discuss with government on tax reduction on health care accessories

3. Increase ratio of favourable : unfavourable host factors
- Introduction of fluoride toothpaste in curriculum
- Sensitize community regarding benefits of fluoride toothpaste
- Sensitize community regarding benefits of sugarless chewing gum
- 1 year supply distribution to school kids
- Advocate on fluoridation
- Application of Silver Diamine fluoride to cavities
- Application of fissure sealant

In a nutshell, intervention must aim to tackle oral health issue in long term perspective such as tackling upstream factors, inequalities and policies. It is clear that oral health department could only do this much. Ultimately, it still depends on the continuous effort put by all parties for the benefit of the community.