

On the 29th of June, the Board of SeeBeyondBorders appointed Colm Byrne as the CEO International Operations in succession to our Founder and CEO of SeeBeyondBorders Ed Shuttleworth. Here, Colm reflects on the exciting opportunities ahead for the organisation.



Change is rarely one-dimensional and never sustainable if driven by one person in isolation. Our focus has always been on the collective over the individual. My leadership of SeeBeyondBorders comes at a time of great change and turmoil in the world economy and social order. Covid is still a shadow over societies not least in Cambodia where schools were closed for much of the period. Since 2020 we have weathered Covid through necessary consolidation of our base to ensure we could build back as the pandemic recedes. I am pleased we have achieved the first part, but the greater challenge now is to build back and indeed emerge stronger and more sustainable than ever. The stark reality is that while our funding may have decreased the need for our work has only increased.

These changes are the context and backdrop to what we are setting out to achieve in SeeBeyondBorders, and they follow the adoption of our Strategic Plan (2021-26) with three strategic objectives, namely to improve children's **learning outcomes**, to become a recognised **centre of excellence**, and to **strengthen our organisation** so as to secure both the staff and funding we need to make a meaningful impact.

The objectives are new, but their foundation is firmly rooted in the ethos Ed, Kate and our entire Cambodian Leadership team have engendered – a relentless focus on quality and substance over cosmetic change, and a targeted investment in people, partnerships and technology to drive success. Going forward we will continue to draw on international and local expertise to drive an evidence-based approach to what works. We will continue to fundraise for what is needed to achieve our objectives and resist designing programmes to merely fit funding opportunities. We will also continue to rely heavily on our quality Cambodian staff as the catalyst for durable change.



The Strategic Plan also signalled an evolution towards what is often called **'localisation'** and the **'de-colonisation of aid'**. I am optimistic about the potential of shifting the locus of control within the SeeBeyondBorders family more firmly to Cambodia. This for us is a practical opportunity and challenge – how to develop and enlist the critical mass of talent we already have in Cambodia over the next two years.

We are in the process of establishing of a local NGO – Vithei Oprum – as part of this evolution. My appointment as CEO of International Operations also signals a commitment to an altered but essentially strengthened international configuration working in close partnership between Vithei Oprum and the independent supporting entities in Australia, Ireland and the UK that are essential to any success here in Cambodia.



All of this will evolve over the next period as part of a Cambodia-driven change process. With it will come some positive changes and strengthening of accountabilities in areas including agreements on allocation of funds to priority programmes, stronger programme design, reconfiguration of responsibilities in financial management, and acting together across countries to ensure we envision and brand our work together and communicate that work coherently and responsibly.

SeeBeyondBorders, like many other international NGOs, is facing heightened challenges in fundraising and making our case for support in an increasingly competitive funding environment. All our efforts described here are in the pursuit of the viability that comes from strong finding partnerships both with the international aid community, such as ANCP, Irish Aid and FCDO, and strong funding partnerships with private funders and supporters. I want you, our existing supporters, to stay the course with us as we evolve to the next stage. Together, collectively we can do something meaningful for the betterment of Cambodian children and communities. What a gift and honour that is. Do get in touch to make change possible.



With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Colm Byrne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Colm Byrne  
CEO International Operations