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Battambang Drop-in Centre Combating Child Labour: Cambodia Project Proposal

Brief Background: The Problem

In parts of Cambodia, poverty is forcing vulnerable families to send their children into dangerous work, harming both their physical and emotional development and depriving them of the opportunity to receive an education and develop to their full potential.

Children as young as five are being coerced into hazardous and exploitative labour with significant risks to their health. Some are sent to scavenge on the streets without boots or gloves for protection from cuts and infection; those working in brick factories risk serious damage to hands and limbs, or worse. All face increased risk of violence, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases and even trafficking.

Project Goal

To improve the quality of life for children through the Battambang drop-in centre and to reduce the most hazardous forms of child labour in Cambodia.

Project Area

Over 85% of Cambodians reside in rural areas like Battambang which is located in the north of Cambodia. With rural poverty standing for almost 90% of total poverty in Cambodia, families in these areas are struggling to access basic needs. There are few jobs and those who do work are usually employed by brick factories where health and safety standards are extremely low. In these desperate circumstances parents have to make the decision to also send their children to work on these conditions.

Key Objectives

- ▶ Increase the number of children attending the drop-in centre and promote the value of education
- ▶ Support income generating activities for parents
- ▶ Raise awareness of child rights

Beneficiaries

It is anticipated that 1,440 Children and 960 adults will benefit directly from the activities of the drop-in centre and the lives of a future 30,785 people will also be improved indirectly through the awareness raising activities.

Cover: Children are given the freedom to have fun again, rather than work throughout their childhood.

Right: Giving children the chance to play is vital for their development.



Project Activities

Increase drop-in centre registration and promote education

- ▶ We will encourage working children in Battambang to register for services at the drop-in centre, where snacks and a meal, medical referrals, counselling, a library and sporting activities are provided. At the centre they are also taught life skills such as the importance of hygiene and child rights.
- ▶ Non-formal education will be provided to children who are behind in their studies or who are unable to attend school.
- ▶ We aim to facilitate children's re-integration into mainstream schooling and supplying them with the necessary uniform, books and a bicycle to get to school, so that this is not an added burden for their parents.
- ▶ Organise outings for children where they can have the chance to enjoy their childhood; to have fun, make friends, enjoy being together, relax, socialize and build networks with one another.

Support income generating activities

- ▶ Vocational training and income generating opportunities will be offered to older children for whom going to school is no longer an option. Past courses have included motorbike maintenance, tailoring and hairdressing. With the skills to start their own business they will be able to earn a living away from the dangers of the brick factories and street scavenging.
- ▶ In cases where working children have become separated from their families, the project will seek to encourage reintegration. Where appropriate, reunited families are able to apply for income generation assistance in the form of a small business loans, with training, small business start up advice and materials. Previously reunited families have been successful in animal husbandry and agricultural production to establish a secure source of income. This reduces the need for the child to work and therefore leave home at a young age.

Raise awareness of child rights

- ▶ Awareness raising for parents is being carried out to enable them to see the importance of education for their children and the long-term benefits for the family. Recent meetings have shown that the intention of the majority of the families is to see their children going back to school.
- ▶ Establish community networks and conduct awareness campaigns surrounding child rights and the consequences of child labour and child abuse. This is particularly important in Cambodia where child trafficking and abuse is a key issue. Domestic violence will also be discussed as part of the awareness-raising campaigns. It is expected that following the training the communities will seek to mainstream their children into school rather than work and sensitize others to child rights.

Recent Progress

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, the project is making great strides forward to improve the quality of children's lives in Battambang. The following are some recent highlights;

- ▶ 171 working children were contacted by the drop-in centre and 52 children were admitted. These children had been working in various sectors, including domestic workers, karaoke parlours, brick factories, construction, agriculture, vehicle washing and scavenging.
- ▶ 18 children were admitted to either school or skills training in beauty salons and tailoring and are making rapid progress with their employers' help.
- ▶ 15 registered children received counselling to help them overcome depression.
- ▶ Project staff have reported improved ability and behaviour in 95% of children attending the non-formal education classes.
- ▶ Two young people helped by the drop-in centre now have their own businesses: one running a beauty salon, another selling sugarcane juice. Both support their families with their income while continuing with their own education.
- ▶ 10 Child Protection Networks have been established in 10 communes in Battambang district. Dozens of key stakeholders, including village and commune chiefs, school teachers, health centre officers and police officers attended workshops for consultations on an effective plan of action on child labour issues and child rights promotion.
- ▶ Four billboards were erected in community areas aimed at sensitising large numbers of people on child labour issues and encouraging parents to return children to schools.
- ▶ A radio station broadcasting to a large part of rural Cambodia was contracted to air two awareness-raising items; a radio mini-drama and a song. Designed to target parents, they profiled the risks and dangers experienced by child domestic workers and the importance of education for children's futures.
- ▶ As a member of the Civil Society Network against Child Labour (CSNACL), the project's Advocacy Officer also worked to raise awareness of child labour issues at a national level. As part of this activity, a one-day meeting was organised in Battambang province earlier this year.

Below: Children recover more quickly from traumatic experiences when they have support from friends



Success Stories

New hope for Salay

Salay Ry, 13, dropped out of school many years ago to support his family. Despite his ambitions to study and find work as a motorbike mechanic, Salay was forced to join his older brothers working long hours for low wages in a brick factory.

His father – then a violent alcoholic – did little to support the family himself. They had to borrow money from the brick factory owner, condemning them all to years of hard work to repay the debt.

'I really wanted to attend school and I missed attending classes so much but I had no choice,' remembers Salay. 'We all work very hard in the brick factory to earn money to buy food. When I first started working in the brick factory, I was scared.'

Things began to change for Salay when a World Vision staff member came to speak to the children in the brick factory and strongly encouraged them to register to study in the drop-in centre.

Salay grins as he recalls the day: 'World Vision staff asked me many questions and encouraged me to attend school. I was really happy ... I got to enjoy good food, fresh water, the opportunity to visit many places, play with other children, attend classes and have access to school materials. And of course there's lots of love and care.'

'I got a bicycle and I ride it with pride to school every day. This really encourages me to study hard, and I am now an outstanding student.'

Salay has now been reintegrated back home with his family and he wants to help them as much as he can: 'I can see my parents and my older brothers work very hard in the brick factory. So I arrange my schedule in such a way that I can help out, to grind the clay and prepare the bricks in the morning and then go to school in the afternoon. And if lessons are in the morning, then I will help my family and work in the afternoon.'

Salay's father has now stopped being violent and holds down a job as a barber and works part-time in the brick factory.

Below: Salay proudly shows off his new bicycle



“My parents really encourage me to study hard – they do not want me to work in the brick factory forever. They always remind me to be punctual for school. I love my family and I want to help my family. I must study hard so that I shall not have to work in this brick factory any more.”



Above: Kimtol has a strong desire to study and he makes sure he never misses a day of school

Kimtol's Courage

Kimtol Hong, 13, lives with a permanent reminder of how dangerous it is to live and work in one of Cambodia's brick factories. His arm is missing – ripped off by a factory machine when he was younger.

His family has been living and working in the factory since Kimtol was 8. His mother had responsibility for inserting clay into a moulding machine and, one day while she was away, Kimtol decided to lend a hand. With no security measures in place, he approached the machine without training and lost his arm.

'At first, I was very ashamed, because people call me "Akombot" which means a guy with one arm,' says Kimtol. It is hard to live with one arm, but as time goes by, I am learning to deal with it.'

Despite his disability, Kimtol has a strong desire to study. But his efforts had been frustrated by his family's frequent movements along the Thai border in search of work. That was until 2009, when representatives of the World Vision Drop-in Centre visited his community.

To encourage Kimtol to go to school, team members worked with his parents to ensure he made it to school, supporting the purchase of books, a school bag, clothes and even a bicycle for Kimtol.

They also provided skills training and resources to help the family find work without having to move from place to place. They supported Kimtol's father in opening a motorbike repair shop near to their home and gave his mother training in gardening and animal rearing. As a result, his younger sister Hong Thida, 10, can now also go to school.

Because of his late start at school, Kimtol is older than his classmates and somewhat behind in his learning. But he is committed to working hard and recently came 30th in his class of 42. His dream is some day to become a nurse so he too can help his parents and community.

We are currently seeking £40,774 for this project and would be very grateful for any contribution that you are able to make towards this work.

The Battambang Drop-in Centre is transforming the lives of children like Salay and Kimtol, giving them hope that they will be able to reach their full potential. None of this work would be possible without the generosity of our donors. Therefore on behalf of all the children in Battambang and their families we'd like to thank you for considering this proposal.

Thank you!

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