

DON BOSCO FOUNDATION OF CAMBODIA

LITERACY CENTER ANDAUNG CHENH

SCHOOL PROJECT FOR CHILDREN OF THE BRICK FACTORIES AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES IN BATTAMBANG



The Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia began in 1992 when the Salesians of Saint John Bosco arrived with a mission to assist orphans and poor youth. Following the example of their Father and Founder, the Salesians identified education as the practical tool to fight poverty.

In addition to helping members from the poorest elements of society, the Salesians always had a special concern for (homeless) poor youth. Following this tradition we began a project in Battambang in October 1999, providing schooling and formation training to illiterate brick factory children and youth to help them gain the skills and human dignity they need to survive and become productive members of society.

BATTAMBANG

Population

Just 291 km by road from the capital, Cambodia's second largest city until the war years, is the leading rice producing province of the country. The city is a small elegant riverside town, home of the best preserved colonial architecture in the country and some of the most hospitable Khmers you can hope to meet...

The province of Battambang has a population of about 889,530 people. The average household is about 5.3 people per family. The percentage of children, as in all the country is very high; about 45% of the population is aged 1 - 14.

While the economically productive age group (15 - 64) forms about 52% of the population.

Literacy and education

In terms of education, 63.4% of the people have not completed primary level education. Among the population aged 7 and above, male literacy rates are considerably higher than female, while literacy rate is higher in urban than in rural areas.

Brick factories



Many children in and around Battambang did and/or could not go to school before the opening of Don Bosco Literacy Center Andaung Chenh because they had to work in the brick factories. Even today, children, regardless of age, help their parents to produce bricks as much as possible. The percentage of child labor is terrifyingly high; social circumstances are distressing so children are forced to work to raise the daily income. Owing to this, they can not attend school so they are denied a fundamental basic right; education.



Around Battambang are about 40 factories. The system of production is very old and working conditions are difficult and painful. All members of the family participate in the work. Their income, 2.000 - 3.500 riel a day (adult), is low (4.000 riel = 1 dollar). Most of the families live inside the factories in very bad conditions...

Don Bosco Literacy Center

There are many NGO's (Non Government Organizations) in Battambang but none cares for the educational needs of the children. Don Bosco Literacy Center Andaung Chenh offers

opportunities for children, in particular to meet the needs of (grown up) children living and working in brick factories, to go to school and receive education by providing them the required means; uniforms, school materials, food (breakfast, lunch and a nutritious porridge in the afternoon), health care and last but not least; education/formation.



The methodology used for the literacy center is flexible and creative, particularly addressed to the situation of older children to offer them support and encouragement to complete the basic elementary education.

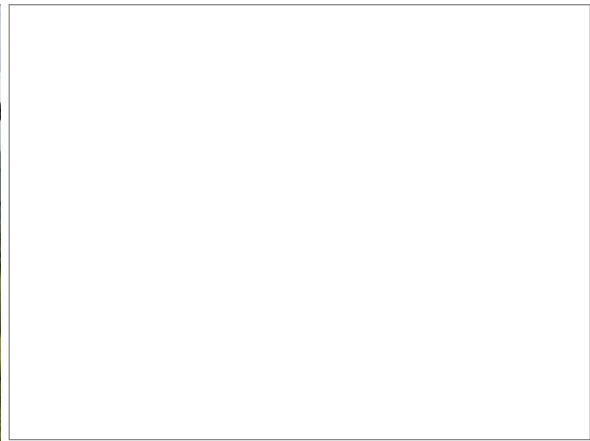
Students are classified from age and foreknowledge. Teaching subjects are Khmer (read, write, dictation, essay), mathematics, social/practical science, morals, English, drawing and sport.

The center educates a little over 100 children through an intensive 4 year program after which the students are reintegrated into government schools for further studies (supported by Don Bosco Children Fund Battambang) or continue at Don Bosco Technical School Poipet or skill training for girls by Salesian Sisters in Battambang.

The primary objective of our project is to contribute to improve the living conditions of the population of Battambang, in particular to improve the life chances of poor children and

disadvantaged youth, by providing appropriate education and basic care. This will enable them to develop the skills necessary to find gainful employment and facilitate their integration into Cambodian society.

The school project will give them more and better chances to be formed, enabling them to build their future.



Social activities

Since the beginning of the center, the Don Bosco ambition was not only to involve the children but also their families, with the intention to educate about topics like personal hygiene, education, social life and others by visiting brick factories and convene meetings.

The intention of these activities is to create a relationship between parents and school, an important factor to form children which is missing at the moment in Cambodian culture. An important objective of the program is to promote development of the entire community with the purpose to create an environment which opens and guarantees opportunities and chances for fully fledged instruction of the youth.

School activities

Every year our agenda is full of activities; workshops for teachers and social workers, competition sports day for students, school parties (Christmas, Khmer New Year, end of school year), trip for top-students, yearly trip for staff and others... Sociable, instructive quality time for students and fellow workers!



Results

Literate children; finished basic elementary education.
Healthy children because of the distribution of 300 nutritious meals a day.
Improved living conditions of children and families.
Awareness activities are realized for parents and children.

Data

Literacy Center Andaung Chenh: 3 class rooms, office, kitchen (all metal constructions), toilet rooms (4) and volunteer house.



Staff (from left): Saroth (teacher), Thon (headmistress), Sokha (teacher), Nareth (teacher), Thol (guard / driver), Sopheak (social worker), Chanthou (cook).

Number of students from 1999 - present day: 405, male: 227, female: 178.





**The foundation of a democratic society is education.
Education is the key to achieving equality, freedom, dignity and peace.
For the children in Battambang Don Bosco Literacy Center Andaung Chenh
is the key to their future.**

Father John Visser
July 2007