

World Vision

Our Voice



Cambodian Children Take Initiatives to End Child Malnutrition



130 children gathered in the port city of Kompong Som last week for World Vision's Children's Leadership Workshop. Representing over 234 Peer Educators and 12,100 other children who participated in the 110 Children's Clubs facilitated by World Vision from 5 provinces, the children came to share their experiences and review the challenges they face in their communities.

All 130 children, aged between 12-19 years old, hold leadership positions in World Vision's children's clubs. As leaders, these children are active members in their communities, encouraging and training their peers to respond to and resolve issues that affect their villages.

This is the fourth workshop that WVC has organized. Different from past years, the focus of this three day workshop was on understanding the basic of nutrition.

"The health status of Cambodia's children has been rated as one of the worst in the world. Over 52% of children under five are malnourished. Child malnutrition has a long-term physical and mental affect on the development of children. Malnourished children can be stunted, skinny, easily infected by other diseases, with low IQ," according to Mr. Ket Chanto, Education Program Manager of World Vision Cambodia.

In her address at the opening speech, Ms. Por Neng, Research and Information System officer of regional advocacy project in World Vision Asia Pacific said, "All of you who participated in this workshop play an important role to prevent and protect other children from malnutrition as all of you will become fathers and mothers or uncles, aunts, sisters and

brothers, or good neighbors of someone. At the same time, the government is also playing an important role to prevent the issue of child malnutrition by demonstrating new strategies on strengthening household food security, health services and addressing environmental conditions that affect people's health."

Throughout the workshop, children were allowed to ask questions and talk about their experiences and challenges.

16 year-old Vy Ta from Battambang province is currently one of the inspiring peer educators that is driving changes in her community.

"This workshop has given me a clear understanding on the basic of malnutrition. Often times I see children in my village suffer from growth problems and poor diet. I also see pregnant mothers starve themselves before and after pregnancy thinking that they can speed up recovery. Others believe that by hanging their body over fire or drink wine after labor they can improve their health."

In the words of Channy Khut from Kompong Speu province, "It is very important that children should be well educated about their rights, the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse from the different tricks of bad people. I've experienced a labour abuse myself when I was forced to drop out of school and work in the garment factory. They made me work 12 hours a day. I really don't want other children to experience the same problem that I did. I want them to know that they have rights, rights to continue their study at school, and rights to voice out their concerns and things that they don't like. Children's clubs play is a very important tool to educate children."

On the third day of the workshop, the children created their own to-do plan and made a commitment to spread the knowledge that they've acquired to their communities.

The three day workshop was funded by the government of New Zealand (NZ AID), Regional Advocacy project of World Vision Asia-Pacific and other donors funded through WVC's Area Development Programs in 5 provinces.

Questions & Answers:



What are the challenges you faced while conducting your educational activities?

Phan Davy, a student in grade 10 and a member of peer educator in Banan district, Battambang province.

"I have had difficulty communicating with the local authority in my village because they think that we are too young to educate older people. They said they don't like the way we talk or act around them. They don't think we can be more informed or educated than them. They feel that since they are older and hold higher positions in the village, they don't need children to educate them. They are stuck with the old mindset and are not open to new ideas that can help them and the community to grow.

Poverty is the main barrier that keeps children away from participating in educational programs. The international children day is an example of an event where children can learn about their rights. Unfortunately, many were not allowed to join because their parents thought the event wastes time. They would rather send children to work than see them participate in such an event.

An anonymous child

"I had some difficulties conducting activities when it rains. The long distance from village to village makes me late all the time. In addition, group facilitators were unable to get along since they demanded their own ideas and failed to listen to others."

Long Raksa, Peer Educator in Kompong Leng District, Kompong Chhnang province.



"My challenges were caused by the lack of educational materials and transportation to raise awareness in target areas. Without proper documentation, children in the village did not have time to participate. Some were too young which made it difficult to manage."



What is the most significant achievement you've gained from your work?

Phin Phearum, Peer Educator from Kompong Leang District, Kompong Chhnang province.

"I've helped to change the habits of people in my village from drinking unboiled and dirty water to clean and boiled water by explaining the advantages of clean drinking water."

Phal Sreymom, Children club leader from Kandal Steung district, kandal province.

"Children ages 6-12 have given me a chance to be a club leader. There were many topics that we've taught including understanding yourself, stress management, community development, building friendship, role models, issues related to gangsters, alcoholism and gambling, drug use and pornography. Then we let children select one of the topics and turn into action. We raised

funds from villagers to buy materials to conduct a village question and answer forum. After the activities completed, I found that children learned to love & helped each other more. They learned to use polite words amongst each other. What impressed me most was seeing parents show appreciation and support for their children's club and club activities. They want to see the clubs to stay open forever so that their children can become role models in the village. I am so proud of the success of my team."

Tim Sothea, PEG in Ballang district, Kompong Thom province.

"The most significant achievement for me was



being ranked first in school for 3 consecutive years. That was due to the following:

1: Every break time I always do my exercises. When I am free from work I would either do homework or read books to prepare for exams. This meant following a strict study schedule.

2: Though I am the top ranked student in class, I never forget to track the progress of other students. I commit to myself that I must place first in every examination.

3: My family is very poor. 500 Riels barely buys a pen or notebook. If I do not study well, I better save the money for other things than waste on a notebook. In contrast, if I spend 100 Riels I will gain at least one bit of knowledge. Imagine what 1000 Riels can do.

4: My parents gave birth to me and work very hard to care for me. They do everything to raise us and send us to school. I don't want to disappoint them. I assured them that I will not disappoint them. I will study hard to protect our dignity so that others would not look down on us.

5: I know my purpose in life. As long as I can breath I will do well.

6: I used to hear from the elderly that when they were young they were not able to attend school as easily as children today. I understood this to mean that they wanted me to study hard.

7: The bamboo is me and the country needs good leaders. I tell myself that my destiny is in my hand.

Sim Chonly, PEG from Kompong Leang district, Kompong Chhnang province.

"I've experienced significant success when my PEG team conducted a concert against violence against children in Kompong Leang district. We had a long match along the road with participation from the students in Kompong Beoung primary school. At the event, we facilitated a question and answer forum on topics related to violence against children. The person who could provide the right answers would receive a prize. We also sang and performed dramatic expressions related to violence against children. Our performance was well received by everyone including the district governor and villagers that abused their children. Their hearts became warm as they recognized the impact of violence against their children, wives, community, and the country as a whole.

Do you have a lesson or experience that you want to share with friends?

Reom SokVey, Children club leader from Kandal Steung district, Kandal province

"To work as a group requires having solidarity towards each other. Before conducting any training in the area, we must first obtain permission from parents, guardians and the local authority.

In Vyta, Children club leader from Banan district, Battambang province

"Each time we teach children there are some who don't pay attention. Sometimes there are gangsters that interfere with our activities. To solve this problem, we need to be patient, gentle and know how to persuade them to participate. Sometimes young children are impatient and refuse to listen to our advice so we need to find good games to gain their interest.

Do you have any request from World Vision and its donors?

Khun Samphors: "I request World Vision and the donors to conduct this kind of training in Sihanouke Ville every year. Please organize the mobile library activities in the village more often. I also would like to request that donors kindly

support the Peer Educators team whose families are struggling with financial problems. Please continue to provide incentives to the PEGs. Last but not least, I would ask WVC to help students find appropriate jobs for the PEGs when they graduate from school.

An anonymous child “I would like to request that program leaders include bible study in their training so that participants can seek to understand God’s words since WV was founded by a group of Christians to help vulnerable children. Moreover, I would request that all participants rejoice in glorifying the Lord together. Last, I would request to have topics related to the cause and effect of HIV&AIDS and drugs in the next training.

Lun Chamnan: “ I would like to request WV and donors to provide materials and incentives to encourage the PEGs to keep working hard at sharing the knowledge that they’ve gained with other children in the community.

Nuon Chanthy: “I would request WV and donors to conduct the next training in Siem Reap with a topic related to the protection of cultural heritage.

Do you want to send a comment to the village & commune leaders, local authority, government and relevant ministries in

regards to child malnutrition in your community?

Reom Saream, Sophan Sisovan and Dao noot



“We would like to see the village & commune leaders and relevant ministries especially the government to integrate a program to prevent child malnutrition in the rural & isolated villages.”

Leo Chanroath and Sophan Sisovan

“I would request the government and relevant ministriestoconductcampaignsontheimportance of nutrition through media broadcast such as TV, Radio or reach out to promote nutrition at the community level. Please produce more leaflets/brochures related to nutrition so that we can distribute in schools, hospitals, especially to villagers so that they can clearly understand the advantages of proper nutrition.”



Left:

“Breast milk is the best food for babies.” Mr. Reth Visal, PEG of Cheng Mean Chey District, Battambaong Operation.

Right:

“Extra food should be given to babies after they are older than 6 months.” Lun Srey Chen, PEG of Kampong Leng District, Kampong Chhnang Operation.



The Dream of Becoming a Village Role Model



Channy is currently studying in grade 11. She was one of 10 outstanding students in her class. Her favorite subject is mathematics. Due to the difficulties at home, Channy was forced to quit her study and get a job as a sewer in a clothing factory near the village. Thanks to World Vision's staff, Channy was brought back to continue her study.

“ I was born to a poor family in Somrong Tong district, Kompong Speu province. We lived in a small wooden house. My parents were often busy with farming and other supplementary work. I helped them do more work at home.

On weekends, I spent my time with other children in the World Vision's children club center. I became a club leader 3 years ago. My role was to care for the club and keep the club function properly.

My major responsibilities include preparing schedules for the club and solving conflicts involving club children. My team included a deputy club leader, a secretary, and 12 group leaders. The club provided many extracurricular activities such as morning exercises, sporting programs, child rights education, sexual exploitation, drugs, violence, bird flu, art and story telling.

As a club leader I experienced many challenges and was reminded that all work are challenges that require our best efforts before we can achieve success. There was a time when I waited for children to participate in the club. I waited but no one came. I even decided to go to children's homes to get them to come. Unfortunately I was criticized by their mothers for wasting their children's time since the time could be spent on doing housework.

I became angry and depressed after spending so much time to offer help only to hear people criticize me for wasting their time.

I realized that educating children to understand their rights, tricks and labour exploitation are very important to them. However, my family conditions became worse due to my father's accident and I was forced to quit school to work in a garment factory.

I worked from 07 AM till 09 PM and allowed a meal break for only 2 hours. Even though the salary that I earned was quite a lot for my family, I felt my rights had been abused. I could not blame my mother's desire for me to quit school but I also could not demand the factory to reduce my working hours.

Fortunately, a World Vision staff kept coming to my house day and night to explain to my mother about the importance of school. Her efforts softened my mother's heart so much that she allowed me to return to school.

The news made me so excited that I felt tears dropping from my eyes. I knew without the help from World Vision and the staff, I would not have had the chance to go back to school. I would not have learned this much. With this personal experience I am now even more convinced that children's clubs play a very important role in preventing children from all kinds of abuses.

In the future I want to become a role model for my village. I want to get a good job. If I can show them that I can do well the villagers will value education and allow their children especially daughters to continue their education. However, if I graduate from high school and they see me working in garment factories they won't let their daughters study. They will think it's a waste of time.

I am happy that my mother is working hard to encourage me to finish high school. She was raised to believe that daughters should not study too much. Now she tells all the neighbors that even if there's nothing to eat at home she'll support me to complete my study. Her words are very encouraging to me.

The Knowledge That I've gained, I gain for My village

My name is Vyta In. I am a 16 year old studying in grade 9. I am a member of peer educators group in Banan district, Battambang province. This is my first time participating in this training. I am glad to have made many new friends and gained so much knowledge in different areas.

During the workshop, I've learned many things that I didn't know before. Lessons on Vitamin A, Iron, Iodine, and breast milk became the most interesting to me because they effect the development of children physically and mentally. I've seen a malnourished child in my village, he was skinny with a swollen stomach, weak and slow at learning. Moreover, I observed a lot of bad practices by mothers in my village. For example, many believe in drying their body over fire, or drink wine after giving birth to speed up recovery. However, what I've learned from the workshop is that this can harm both the mother and newborn. Many also believe that eating too much before and after labor is bad. But what I've learned is that mothers should eat as much as they want to keep them and their newborns properly nourished.

When I return home and see others facing these problems, I will be sure to share what I learned. If they hesitate to listen to me because I am a child I will talk to the village or commune leader to help educate them at their home. I would also like to urge the Cambodian government to reinforce villagers or commune leaders about healthcare. During emergencies they should respond immediately. The government should offer public announcements on issues related to malnutrition. I want to request the government to start in small and isolated villages rather than developing towns that already have everything. When rural areas become developed, there'll be fewer orphans, street children, child labour and child exploitation.

In the future I want to see my village transform for the better. I want to see children in the next generation become smarter and have more opportunities with no exam corruptions that we have today.



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Frequently Asked Questions:

What is a Children's Club?



Children's Clubs are just one of World Vision's interventions to reduce risks to vulnerable children. Over 12,100 children participate in World Vision's 110 Children's Clubs in five provinces around the country.

The Children's Clubs are part of the **Children**

at High Risk Prevention Project (CHRPP) which empower children to protect themselves from violence, exploitation and sexual abuse through community education activities. CHRPP conducts Children's Clubs in existing ADPs to expose children to positive role models and conduct training in child rights in order to prevent trafficking and exploitative labour. CHRPP also supports community-based income generation activities.

Children are valuable. They have rights that should be acknowledged and a voice that should be heard. A Children's Club is a collection of children who join together in groups facilitated by World Vision but lead by children to promote children's rights and prevent the risks faced by vulnerable children.

Who can join the Clubs?

The clubs are open to any children in the community.



How many Clubs are there?

World Vision facilitates 110 clubs in five provinces of Cambodia such as; Kompong Speu, Kompong Chhnang, Battambang, Kompong Thom and Kandal.

How many children participate in the Clubs?

The clubs started in 1999. There are now 12,100 children participating in clubs. This represents a significant number of Cambodian children positively influencing their communities.

What age are the children involved?

There are two types of clubs which take account of the needs of children and young adults:

- 8-13 year old group
- 14-18 year old group (youth clubs)

How many boys/girls in the clubs?

Girls and boys are all encouraged to join the clubs. There is an even distribution of girls and boys in the clubs.

How often do the clubs meet?

The Children's Clubs meet twice a week; on Thursday afternoon and Sunday morning.

When did the Children's Clubs start?

World Vision first started Children's Clubs in 1999 in Kandal Steung.

Why did World Vision develop Children's Clubs?

World Vision respects the important role children can have in their communities and the ability to children to reduce the risks they were facing. We had been partnering with the community for ten years and wanted to address

children's issues by encouraging their improved participation in the community.

What activities take place in the clubs?

Children's Clubs are designed to reduce the vulnerability of children at risk. The activities of the clubs include training in children's rights, lessons in how to avoid exploitation and abuse, empowerment of children to speak up against injustice and development of leadership skills.

What positive changes have the children's clubs resulted in?

The Children's Clubs enable children to have a voice in their community. The Clubs promote children's rights and many positive achievements results. The achievements vary depending on the needs in each community, but include the following:

- More children attend school
- Children learn how to avoid risk of sexual trafficking
- Reduction in domestic violence
- Improved income generation opportunities
- Children influencing positive change

How does World Vision select the areas where we conduct the clubs?

World Vision's Children's Clubs are based in our areas of operation. World Vision has targeted those areas in which we have a long-



term established presence and where there is also particular risks faced by children because of poverty.

Workshop Information

What event is took place?

This was the first Children's Club leadership workshop conducted by World Vision in Cambodia.

Who was participating?

There were 140 children involved in the workshop. They are the leaders of the Children's Clubs. They will now share their learnings with their friends when they return home so they can all become active members in their communities

What is the workshop about?

The workshop focused on leadership, child rights, children's participation in their community's development, violence against children, peace building and the basic of nutrition. In particular, this conference focused on the issue of preventing vulnerable children from all kind of risks.



How are children selected to come to the conference?

This workshop was planned for the leaders of the Children's Clubs or those in positions of authority. The children who attended were those who demonstrated a very strong commitment to children's issues in their community.

Preventing Risks to Vulnerable Children

The Situation for Children in Cambodia

More than 56 percent of Cambodia's population is under the age of 19. Living in extreme poverty, many of these children face serious risks presented by homelessness, hazardous labour and prostitution

The Risks

Children living on the streets

It is estimated that over 1200 children live on the streets in Phnom Penh and about 10,000-20,000 are of the street (gather on the street and go back to their resident with families at night time). Usually orphaned, abandoned or from broken families, many have experienced violence, abuse, health problems, malnutrition, substance abuse, and exploitation. Living impoverished lives, many have no idea of the joys of childhood experienced by other children around the world.

Children working in hazardous labour

There are over 1.5 million children aged between 7-17 who do not participate in education or normal play activities because their circumstances have forced them into the workforce. Child labour in Cambodia includes work in brick factories, scrap collecting, scavenging and begging.

Children vulnerable to sexual exploitation

The sexual abuse of children by locals and foreigners causes unimaginable physical and mental harm to children and destroys the fabric of Cambodian society. Based on recent findings, it is estimated that over 80,000 women and children are involved in the sex trade in Cambodia alone. Over one third are believed to be children.

Our Voice

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