

Community Education on “Thoughts for Development”

The ‘We Help Each Other’ Club

PROJECT REPORT

Deidre Pelletier, Peace Corps Volunteer

Title:	Thoughts for Development Training Workshop
Date:	31 October-3 November 2009
Location:	Chub Vary Pagoda, Chub Vary Commune, Preah Net Preah District, Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia
Number of Participants:	150
Hosted by:	We Help Each Other Club
Funded by:	Cambodia Student Association in Japan

I. Project Background

The “Thoughts for Development” training workshop was for local high school students in and around Chub Vary Commune, Preah Net Preah District, Banteay Meanchey Province, Cambodia. The workshop, originally set for 5 days, lasted 4 days due to time constraints. The workshop introduced various relevant topics such as positive thinking, goal setting, and the importance of education. A facilitator from outside the Commune conducted the workshop which was attended by 150 students. Before conducting “Thoughts for Development”, ‘We Help Each Other’ Club had the intent to promote a link between stronger education/methods of thinking and personal development. The hope was that the impact of the workshop would then spread into the community and inspire an even larger level of growth.

II. Project Approach

The workshop was hosted in a building inside the local pagoda complex. It was primarily conducted in a lecture-like style with some group work taking place outside. Due to the large number of participants, the following rules were enforced and monitored by Club members throughout the duration of the training:

- Turn off cell-phones
- Be on time
- Participate
- Pay attention to the lesson
- No eating

It was noted that the rules were well respected by all the participants and played a strong role in the workshop’s efficiency.

In addition, the number, level, and abilities of the students joining the workshop were evaluated prior to the start of the workshop through discussion. Therefore, the content of the training was altered in order to be more relevant to the attendees. The topics covered during the workshop

mainly revolved around two themes—Thinking and Education. Specifically, the content covered was as follows:

- **Thinking**
 - How to process ideas
 - How to organize ideas
 - The power of thinking (if you think you can, you can)
 - Understanding the difference between right and wrong
 - How to alleviate stress and negative thoughts
 - Being proactive with thoughts, taking initiative
 - “Can” and “Can’t”
- **Education**
 - The importance of education
 - The disadvantages of ignorance vs. the benefits of education
 - Everyone is able to study
 - How to study effectively—study techniques
 - The importance of trying and believing in yourself
 - “I’m weak”
 - “I forget everything”
 - Comparing your ability to others
 - The importance of reading
 - The correlation between continued study and personal growth
 - A life without goals
 - Identifying and achieving goals

In addition, it was noted which topics were considered the most interesting to the attendees based off of evaluation and note-taking. The topics which held the students’ interest (in order from the most interesting to the least) were:

- Thinking : How to process ideas
- Thinking: “Can” and “Can’t”
- Education: The importance of education
- Education: How to study effectively
- Education: The importance of trying and believing in yourself
- Education: Comparing your ability to others
- Education: The importance of reading
- Education: A life without goals
- Education: Identifying and achieving goals
- Thinking: Being proactive with thoughts

II. Original Goals of Project

- To effectively instruct workshop participants in goal setting, problem solving, and individual motivation.
- To promote the importance of education and to stress a strong commitment to improving school performance.
- To encourage positive thinking, self-confidence, and stronger relationships.

- To help the youth recognize the local resources they have and to teach them how to make use of the resources in order to become self-sustainable.
- To promote more community involvement among youth, ideally through ‘We Help Each Other’ Club.

IV. Anticipated Outcomes and Indicators based off Project Goals

- **The students participating will demonstrate a significant improvement in critical thinking and goal setting.**
 - By the mid-point of the workshop, students will be able to identify and properly understand the link between ‘thinking’ and a higher quality of life through several different key examples.
 - By the end of the workshop, each student will have a more positive and organized set of goals for him/herself and will be able to discuss their goals with others.
 - By the end of the workshop, students will also be able to identify potential problems in achieving their goals and develop at least a few strategies to counteract them.
- **The participants will have a stronger appreciation and respect for education and continued learning.**
 - By the end of the workshop, the student participants will be able to name several different ways in which a better education can improve their lives and the lives of their families and friends.
 - Several months after the completion of the workshop, students will demonstrate an improvement in overall performance at the local school, including a higher attendance rate and level of scores.
- **The students will understand the importance of thinking positively.**
 - By the end of the workshop, the student participants will demonstrate a higher level of self-confidence seen through their actions and level of comfort during discussions.
 - Throughout the workshop, students will also be able to demonstrate a positive view of themselves and their abilities noted by their responses to questions involving self-esteem.
 - By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to name their main relationships and to give at least several ways of improving and strengthening them.
- **Participants will show a greater understanding of self-sustainability and its role in development.**
 - By the end of the workshop, students will be able to give a few examples about the resources they have at their disposal on a local level that they do not need to get from elsewhere (e.g. crops for food, clothes made locally, educators, etc.).
 - By the end of the workshop, the student participants will understand the definition of self-sustainability and be able to give several reasons why it’s important in overall development.
- **The ‘We Help Each Other’ Club will experience an increase in community awareness and participation.**
 - Several months following the workshop, the club officers will note a significant rise in attendance and member enrollment.
 - One year post-workshop, the level of action in the community with various educational and developmental projects will have increased seen especially in the number of projects led by the club and its members.

V. Achieved Outcomes and Indicators based on Project Goals

Note: the information provided as indicators in this portion was primarily assessed through note-taking, observation, and discussion by club members and other attendees. In addition, there will be continuing evaluation of the workshop's success beyond the date of this report's submittal.

- **The participants demonstrated a significant improvement in critical thinking skills and goal setting.**
 - Following the first day of the workshop, each student was able to identify the steps necessary to take when processing ideas.
 - After the session “*Can*” and “*Can’t*”, the students expressed an improved understanding of the power of thinking and its link to one’s ability to act.
 - At the end of the workshop, each student shared his/her goal and began to understand strategies of achieving them. In addition, if a student was unsure about an issue related to his/her goal, the student shared this as well with the group. The student then received help from fellow participants or the facilitator in thinking about his/her issues or problems.
- **The students gained a stronger appreciation for education and continued learning.**
 - Following the workshop, there was an increased enrollment in English courses in and outside of Chub Village. Those already enrolled have increased their attendance.
 - Also following the workshop, several students traded in cell phones in order to purchase mp3 players to practice English listening skills. This evidence is tied directly to the impact of the workshop and shows an increased appreciation and motivation towards learning.
 - After the completion of the workshop, a significant number of participants have used the study techniques learned in their daily classes and voiced an improvement in overall comprehension.
- **The students now have a greater knowledge of positive thinking.**
 - After the Education session *The importance of believing in yourself*, all participants expressed a desire to stop their negative thoughts about themselves.
 - Following *How to alleviate stress and negative thoughts*, the students were able to understand the link between negative thoughts and feeling poorly and depressed. The participants now understand the power of negative thinking on the body and the mind.
- **There has been a noticeable increase in awareness and interest in ‘We Help Each Other’ Club.**
 - Following the completion of the camp, the number of students wishing to participate in the Club has increased shown by the list of student names wishing to register.
 - Due to the large number of attendees and the fact that some came from outside the village, the awareness of ‘We Help Each Other’ Club and its vision has grown.

VI. Problems Encountered

- **Too many attendees**
 - The workshop was initially designed to host 70 attendees. However, due to its popularity and its relevancy to a large number of students, the total amount for the 4-

day training was 150 people. This number proved problematic when the facilitator attempted to work with the group as a whole. Having 150 students also produced distractions in some cases.

- **Distractions from outside of the classroom**
 - Beyond having too large of a group, the location of the workshop proved to be slightly problematic. Because the training courses took place inside a pagoda complex, there were people from outside regularly coming and going as well as a pagoda's typical activities taking place. Noise from the outside was an issue.
- **Problems with the generator and power**
 - Because Chub Village does not have electricity 24 hours per day, a generator for the projector was used in the workshop. However, problems with the machine arose and made some of the training more difficult.
- **Not enough time for detailed explanation**
 - Certain topics were considered more interesting or required further explanation in order for all the attendees to benefit. There were three topics in particular which the students would have liked to have explained in more detail. They were:
 - How to think
 - This section had noticeably more questions from the attendees than other sections
 - How to study effectively
 - All attendees expressed interest in developing their study skills
 - Comparing your ability to others
 - The majority of the students could relate to this topic

VII. Project Budget

Proposal Budget

Item	Cost	Community Contribution	Amount Needed
Transport: Guest Presenter	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Accommodations: Guest Presenter	\$30.00 (\$5.00/6 nights at local hotel)	\$30.00	\$0.00
Food: Guest Presenter	\$50.00	\$50.00	\$0.00
Projector Rental	\$100.00 (\$20.00/5 days)	\$0.00	\$100.00
Generator Rental	\$18.75 (\$3.75/5 days)	\$18.75	\$0.00
Documents/Supplies	\$227.50 (\$3.25/70 participants)	\$177.50	\$50.00
Total Amount	\$526.25	\$276.25	\$250.00
Total Funds Requested			\$250.00

Finalized Budget

Item	Cost	Community Contribution	Amount Used
Transport: Guest Presenter	\$150.00	\$0.00	\$150.00
Accommodations: Guest Presenter	\$30.00 (\$5.00/6 nights at local hotel)	\$0.00	\$30.00
Food: Guest Presenter	\$50.00	\$10.00	\$40.00
Projector Rental	\$100.00 (\$20.00/5 days)	\$100.00	0.00
Generator Rental	\$18.75 (\$3.75/5 days)	\$18.75	\$0.00
Documents/Supplies	\$227.50 (\$3.25/70 participants)	\$197.50	\$30.00
Total Amount	\$526.25	\$276.25	\$250.00
Total Funds Requested			\$250.00

VIII. Impact and Sustainability

The “Thoughts for Development” training workshop used relevant material and targeted a large group of students, including all the ‘We Help Each Other’ Club members. Because the content was introduced effectively, a high level of participation was noted. Students were comfortable asking questions and sharing personal information because they understood what they could learn from the experience. At the end of the workshop, each student was able to identify his/her goal and to truly understand the impact of education and why it is important. The students, as a whole, also requested a similar workshop again in the future.

In regards to sustainability, the attendees have taken the knowledge they’ve gained to educate their family, friends, and communities. Every attendee can now identify his or her own personal goals and try to find a strategy to achieve them. They therefore can help others around them to organize their thoughts in much the same way, helping their friends and family to be productive in turn. At the end of the workshop, the students expressed their commitment to the ideas and concepts in “Thoughts for Development” and how they will continue to struggle daily against obstacles in the future by using what they’ve learned. Discussions with students by Club members revealed that the students truly believed that they had been inspired by the training material. This level of impact will therefore undoubtedly be spread throughout the community.

In addition, the Club officers as well as the community teachers participating in the event will continue to use the concepts of positive thinking, productivity, and goal setting when working with others. Already, in both private and public classes, the students have been exposed to emphasis placed on honesty, hard work, and continued study. This has produced motivation in the class as a whole which was not seen prior to being taught the concepts from “Thoughts for Development”.

Some of the photo of our activities

Place and participants:



Group Discussion



During the learning Sessions

