

Eye on Cambodia: Children



Location

Samphin is a town on Koh Pdao island in the Kratie Province 90 minutes journey from Kratie Town. Set on an island in the centre of the Mekong, it is surrounded by wetlands that are important areas for biodiversity.



Background Issues

The UN estimates that 33% of Cambodians are malnourished and a startling 45% of children under 5 are underweight. According to the National Institute of Statistics, 1 in 8 children in Cambodia die before their fifth birthday, often from ailments that can be avoided by proper immunization, better nutrition, and better sanitation. Impoverished families with a low level of education are less likely to be able to send their children to school, and therefore are not able to empower their children to break the cycle of poverty. Children often work long hours to support the daily food needs of a family, so have no time to study or learn technical life skills.

Rural communities are traditionally dependent on forestry and fishing. Without alternatives, many young people are forced to leave their communities and work as migrant labourers.

Family History



Mrs. Susa Vay is 39 and was married in 1992 to her husband who is now in the Cambodian Army. She has been on the island since she was born and all 3 of her children have progressed far in school.

What has CRDT done?

Mrs. Susa Vay's family now have a toilet, and rainwater storage tanks that provide clean water for drinking and washing. They can benefit from a more diverse diet in the form of chicken, pork and vegetables, which means better health. "I want to help my children to get educated, I also have them collect all of the rubbish in the area and put it in the new rubbish bins". She says, waxing lyrical about her kids. So what was a day in her children's life like BEFORE and AFTER CRDT came to Samphin?

"They would get up and do the housework, then prepare the breakfast for family, clean the house, go to school, come back after and do more housework. But now the children have changed, they clean themselves and drink only boiled water, they do not go to the river to drink anymore. Our house is cleaner and there is less waste, they have knowledge about the environment now".

What has changed?

It begins to rain as Mrs. Susa Vay speaks more about children, and why she thinks it's important they get a good education: "The children must be well educated, they are the ones that replace the old people, and they are the next generation. Being well educated is better than knowing nothing, but my children still have so little time to study outside of school, they try to study alone at night". The problem seems to be that there are often just too many errands and household tasks to be completed, surely farming takes up most of the day? Do they work the fields with their parents too?



"If they work in the rice paddies the children will not be well educated, they will not be able to attend school, and then they don't think much about their future, they will not do very well. It is exploitation of child labour. I do not farm anymore; I hire the land and some buffalo to another villager and get rice from them". She was then quick to add some wise words: "Children are the bamboo shoot that becomes the bamboo, if the shoot is no good, how can they become good bamboo?"



She also had some advice for those in other villages that don't know the benefits of sending young children to school. "In this village there are families that stay far away from the main village, so the children find it hard to travel in to school. I have tried to encourage the families to move closer so they can go to school more easily, and to think about their futures. I explained that they benefit from being able to read and calculate well, they will get good jobs and be able to better themselves, be able to better us. If the parents are not well educated, they should make sure their children are not like them".



A child in Ou lang wearing some stylish shorts...

4 very happy kids at the school in Koh Pdao village... as well as one very camera shy lad behind that shutter.

