

Fostering youth leadership in rural Cambodia

Anna McKeon and Khouth Sochampawatd
PEPY – Promoting Education emPowering Youth
PO Box 93220
GPO Siem Reap Angkor
Cambodia

Tel: (855) 979245571
Email: anna@pepycambodia.org

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Abstract

Young people are too often ignored in policies and programming and yet they are the leaders that will be dealing with the global problems of today. In Cambodia, young people in rural areas face challenges of poor quality education, few job opportunities, and little access to resources. However, a key barrier to their personal development and the development of their communities is the belief that they don't know how to be, or cannot be agents of change.

While improvements in education and connection to training and opportunities are critical within the youth community, it is also necessary to foster the idea of active citizenship. In order to support their development, young people need to be encouraged to identify the issues that matter to them and given the confidence and encouragement to create their own solutions to these issues. This paper conveys insights from participatory voluntary action projects implemented in rural Siem Reap and examines both the successes and challenges of this approach to supporting youth leadership.

Definition of youth

In Cambodia, “youth” are males and females, single or married, between the ages of 15 and 30.¹ The scope of the work cited in this project is actually slightly different, as the activities were conducted with young people between the ages of 5 and 20. Building leadership qualities at a young age can in turn affect the choices made by those in their 20s. However, this study cannot comment on approaches to building youth leadership in those aged 20-30 who have not already been exposed to the ideas set out below.

Youth leadership in a national context

One of the goals within the policy of Youth Development from The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is to “enable youth to share their perspectives, opinions, and decisions in their community” and in the broader national development context.² Two of the strategies laid out to achieve this goal are to “create an enabling environment for full participation by young people within local communities and agencies” and to “promote formal mechanisms for effective participation by youth within civil society”.³

The development of young people is critical to any nation’s future, but in Cambodia it is particularly pertinent due to recent history. Not only can the majority of the population can be defined as “young people”, but there is a tangible nervousness about the rising of this population mass. Working with young people to shape their country’s future in a positive and sensitive manner is critical not only to national growth but also national stability.

Scope of study

The commentary in this paper is based on the findings of projects run in rural Siem Reap – specifically in Chanleas Dai commune, Kralanh district. While the author has been introduced to similar findings in other areas in Cambodia, these have not been validated.

Kralanh district is located 57km from Siem Reap town. Chanleas Dai is 7km away from Kralanh district town center.

Chanleas Dai in context:

Table 1.1 Social statistics for Chanleas Dai, Kralanh and Siem Reap 2010⁴

	Chanleas Dai	Kralanh	Siem Reap
No of families	1,766	13,269	178,792
Total population	8,959	68,368	946,656
% population growth	9.6%	4%	3%
% families whose primary occupation is agriculture	98.9%	91.2%	81.1%
% young people who do not attend high school	60%	40%	30%

¹ National Policy on Cambodia Youth Development 2011

² Goal 4.5, National Policy on Cambodia Youth Development 2011

³ Strategy 4.6 “Enhancement of Youth Participation”, National Policy on Cambodia Youth Development 2011

⁴ Commune Database Online, copyright (c) 2010 National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development

Table 1.2 Development Indicators of Cambodia, Siem Reap and Kralanh, 2008⁵			
	Cambodia	Siem Reap Province	Kralanh District
% of individuals with no schooling*	32.7	41.2	47.6
% illiterate (adults)	21.8	28.8	38.0
% with no toilet at home	64.8	72.2	87.6
% with no electricity at home	72.2	76.2	88.1
% with no radio at home	57.1	61.0	68.0
% with no access to a telephone	59.5	60.3	76.3
% of economically active population working in agriculture	73.8	74.2	91.7

As demonstrated by the information in tables 1.1 and 1.2 Kralanh District and Chanleas Dai commune are typified with high levels of school drop-out and limited connectivity to external information sources. A young person born just an hour outside of Siem Reap is twice as likely to drop out of school as a young person from Siem Reap.

Challenges for communities in rural Siem Reap

Support for youth development at a policy level is welcome and encouraging but real and practical implementation of these strategies can be very difficult given the challenges of location and context.

Before implementing specific youth leadership projects, in 2009 a PRA was conducted with community members from each village in Chanleas Dai commune, and with young people from Chanleas Dai village. The purpose of conducting the PRA was to obtain an overview of the biophysical and social conditions in the locality, understand the community's past experience and to gain more specific information on people's livelihood systems and challenges. The tools used within this PRA included a village walk, base map and social map, developing seasonal calendars, trend analysis, problem tree, solution ranking and SWOT analysis.

Seasonal calendar for Chanleas Dai commune

Climate and income	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Climate	Cold		Hot and dry	Rain								
Rice production					Planting						Harvest	
Fishing												
Vegetable planting												
Weaving mats												
Disease epidemic			Diathorrea			Dengue						
Festival and wedding				Khmer NY						Pchum Ben		

⁵ IPUMS sample of General Population Census of Cambodia 2008

*measured among household members over age six

Feedback from participants – from both children and adults – was that the greatest challenges facing the population were food shortage and disease. 11 more specific problems were identified and participants brainstormed the reasons behind these problems, and possible ways to address them.

- Unfertilized soil
- Lack of rain & agricultural skills
- Lack of waterway/water source
- Lack of perseverance
- Illiteracy
- Disease (both for children and animals)
- Parents do not value/understand education
- Shortage of food
- Few employment opportunities
- Poor quality of education
- Too many children per family

Impact of these challenges relating to fostering youth leadership

It was also felt that the fact that these basic rights listed above were not being met contributed to other situations that were impeding the development of young people in the area.

Migration to Thailand

In rural Siem Reap the trend in illegal migration to Thailand for seasonal labor is increasing. Young people do not see opportunities for themselves within their own communities, nor do they see how they could be involved in generating those opportunities. Instead, they choose short term economic gain over long term personal development. They drop out of school and earn money to support their families and gain a high standard of living. In 2012, 61 students in grade 8 and grade 9 dropped out of school. 39 of these students (64%) dropped out to migrate to Thailand for work.

While some community leaders understand and even support this trend, others do not:

“I think we are going to be soon a forgotten village. There is no one left but the very old and the children. How can we continue to develop like this? We have the World Food Program that supports school breakfasts, we have teachers who come, we love the students, we have enough classrooms, but still students go to Thailand instead.” (Former Principal of Prasat Knar Primary School, Siem Reap province)

This migration causes two large, socio-economic problems. One of these, as suggested above, is that impoverished communities have little chance of long-term economic improvement if their members are repeatedly leaving the country. Another is that employers in Cambodia are struggling to recruit a work force. As tackled by NEA in their Labor Market Survey 2012 in Siem Reap, skill mismatch has emerged as a huge labor market issue in both nationwide and in Siem Reap province.⁶ Organizations looking for skilled workers struggle to find qualified graduates. Equally, those organizations in need of unskilled workers find their potential workforce has migrated to Thailand for higher wages.

⁶ Labor Market Survey 2012 in Siem Reap: Key Findings by National Employment Agency (Cambodia)

While the chances of earning a better wage (albeit with the inherent dangers of illegal migration) can be a preferable financial option for many young people and their families, what is lost is the opportunity for these young people to become active, educated citizens who are able to shape major decisions about their own futures.

Education system

As in many areas in Cambodia, in rural Siem Reap a shortage of qualified teachers, limited resources and problems of access all pose additional challenges to those young people interested in attending school. However, even those who overcome these challenges and complete their education still may not have gained the necessary skills to help them in their future lives. The style and quality of education available does not support the development of essential life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and even basic confidence. Students who do attend school are seldom encouraged to express their opinions or challenge assumptions. As noted by Lena Wallqvist in a study on Youth in Cambodia for Forum Syd; “Many young Cambodians express that they have little access to channels through which they can actually influence and make a difference. Amongst several of them, this causes a feeling of impatience or even frustration.”⁷

Even with regards to their own personal growth, young people can find it difficult to take action. Students attending Kralanh District High School in Siem Reap commented that they were aware of scholarships available for further education and training but chose not to apply out of a belief that they would not be selected. They also communicated that they were reluctant to apply for jobs in urban areas, believing that nepotism, and a bias against rural applicants would prevent them from securing such opportunities. Young people in rural areas are not used to having an agency in their own development, and the suggestion of change can be quite an intimidating prospect.

Access and exposure

For young people in rural areas there are also few opportunities to be exposed to new ideas, or to access services. Students in urban areas can connect with job centers, vocational trainings centers, NGO projects and government youth initiatives such as job fairs. In rural areas, access to such services is difficult. Many students at Kralanh High School over one hour bicycle ride away from the school and solve this issue through renting small rooms near to the school in order to attend. To them access services 57km away in Siem Reap poses yet another challenge.

Addressing these challenges

As many of these issues are interconnected, it was proposed to introduce a participatory, child-led approach to address holistically some of the key problems highlighted. Supporting children’s learning and developing young leadership could potentially be achieved through encouraging young people to address the issues (such as disease and illiteracy) that they and their parents identified as having the greatest impact on their lives. To implement this idea, Child Clubs were established in all villages in Chanleas Dai commune and welcomed children between the ages of 5 and 15. These Child Clubs were facilitated by adults recruited from Chanleas Dai commune. The Clubs met under houses, for two hours every Sunday.

Background to the model

⁷ Youth in Cambodia: Organizations, Activities and Policies, Lena Wallquist for Forum Syd 2002

The methodology for the clubs was based on a technique developed by the Child-to-Child trust in the UK. The Child-to-Child Trust promotes child-centered, active learning approaches that engage children on health and development issues.⁸ Children then disseminate their learning to other children, their families and their wider communities through participatory research activities. The three key features of this approach are as follows:

6 steps of Child-to-Child methodology:

1 – Understanding the problem. The young people are first invited to share and brainstorm issues that affect them, their family or their community. Regularly cited issues include diarrhea, malaria and dengue, road safety, head lice. Once the issue has been agreed on, young people share their experiences on how this has happened to them and their family and how it affects their life.

2 – Finding out more. The club members are encouraged by facilitators to undertake research in their own community. They interview their peers and adult to community members to understand how many of them are also affected by this problem and what it means to them. The young people are also encouraged to make their own observations on how activities in their home community affect or contribute to the issue. They also collect opinions on how this problem can be addressed.

3 – Discussing findings and planning action. Club members bring their research findings to the club and share them. The facilitators encourage them to look for commonalities in what they have found and to think about how that might help them solve the problem. Typically at this point there may be a learning intervention such as facilitators sharing posters or ideas about the causes of diarrhea, and the proven benefits of water filters and hand-washing. The young people learn about these solutions and consider what will be useful for them and their community. They then decide how to take action on what they have learnt.

4 – Taking action. This can involve a drama or a campaign that the young people organize for their community. At times the action might be simple, such as visiting houses to talk about what they have learnt to other adults and children.

5 – Evaluating. The young people examine how effective their actions have been. Has anything changed in their lives? In the lives of their family? What was the result of their activities?

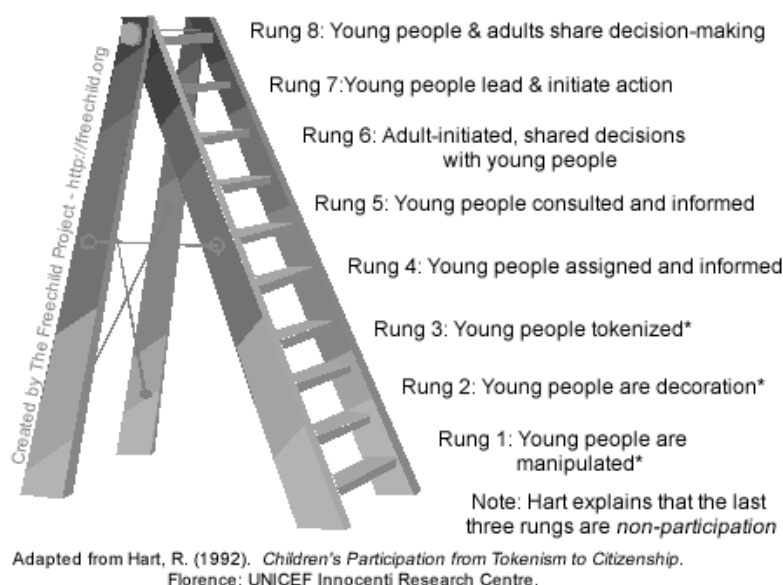
6 – The last step in the process examines how the activity could be improved. The young people are encouraged to think about ways they could have worked together better, or communicated their ideas more effectively.

Participation

The clubs are run in a participatory manner, inspired by the Ladder of Participation as suggested by Roger Hart:

⁸ www.child-to-child.org

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Active learning:

The Child-to-Child methodology emphasizes the difference between doing an activity and active learning. Active learning is learning which engages and challenges children and young people's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations.⁹ For example – reading a story with children is an activity. Asking questions during the story or talking to the children about how the story is relevant to their life is active learning. Other common active learning techniques include the use of drama, work groups, games-based learning and creative writing. Active learning is effective in building critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as confidence and self-efficacy.

In this way, the club seeks to be as young–people focused as possible. They identify the issues, and, after a facilitated process, they are the ones taking their learnings and solutions to their community.

These clubs were also supplemented with “Life skills camps” which involved a 2-3 day camp with club members using games and activities to promote teamwork and communication skills.

Impact

With each topic covered by the young people, the facilitators monitored the change in behavior with the young people and their families. Over the 5 years of the project the facilitators noted success with the following topics:

Clean environment: The amount of trash present in the villages decreased. Villages invested in and used trash cans. Families became more aware of the quantity of cash they were

⁹ Definition sourced from www.educationscotland.org

generating. Young people encouraged each other not to litter and to take pride in their environment.

Awareness of oral health: Improvement in actual oral health was not monitored as this project was not broad enough in scope to attempt to make changes in the oral health of the community. However, improvements were noted in the fact that families began purchasing toothbrushes and parents and children took up teeth brushing on a regular basis.

Hand-washing: Through observation of community members it was apparent that more families understood the importance of hand-washing and practiced it daily, especially when handling food.

Math and Khmer: As part of the initial PRA it was identified that young children in school were learning, but not fully understanding. To address this, Child Clubs initiated peer-to-peer learning meet-ups. These meet ups were run by children with the aim of supporting each other in their studies and explaining lessons and concepts to each other than that might have struggled to fully grasp in a classroom setting. These meet-ups were successful not only in supporting the young people's learning, but also in developing their communication and leadership skills. Many young people became quite passionate about their role in supporting younger students learn and grow.

Case studies

Chhunly is a 20 year-old High School student in Kralanh who comes from Chanleas Dai village. Chhunly attended Child Clubs for 4 years.

"The two most important topics that I learnt about in Child Clubs were clean water and clean environment. Good health comes from drinking clear water. If people drink clean water they do not get sick a lot.

If it is clean around one person's house - if their neighbor can see that, then they clean their house too. Then the whole village after a time will be clean, and then another village will see that village and they will clean the same. So in that way Cambodia can be clean.

I learnt about water filters and how to get clean water. My family buy the water filter and I use it every day until now. I did a show to the villages about the water and they came to watch. They learnt and they asked questions. 90% of my village started using water filters.

For clean environment we learnt together about how to organize rubbish, how to make compost, selling cans, burying plastic. We did research in the villages about how much rubbish is there. We planned how to show to the village about the clean environment. Then we designed a presentation that went to villages houses to show them how to organize their rubbish. It worked to start off with for 3-4 months. Then people started to put rubbish again. So we decided to keep going back to that project.

Before I joined Child Clubs I don't know how to talk to the people in my village. But then I had to meet with them for Child Clubs so I had to be brave. I learnt how to speak in public, not to be rude when speaking to each other. I had to be brave as every club I would have to stand up and speak to other members in the club.

I think it's important for other clubs to meet each other and learn from each other. It's important for young people to have good communication."

Vanna is a former teacher at Chanleas Dai Primary School. He commented on how the students who attended Child Clubs were more confident at expressing themselves within a classroom context – they were more comfortable with letting the teacher know when they didn't understand the lesson:

“Students who go to clubs are more confident at expressing their ideas – especially when working in groups. It's easier for teachers to see when they don't understand as the students express themselves. If you give students an assignment to complete in groups, the students who go to the clubs are more likely to lead those groups.”

Unexpected impact

Aside from those impacts outlined above, the greatest change that this project had on the Chanleas Dai community was realized in 2010.

A group of young people in Chanleas Dai, including Chhunly, quoted previously, aged between 12 and 18 decided to start their own voluntary organization. This organization, called Volunteer for Community Development (VCD) has a mission to fuel sustainable growth in communities. Their tagline is “Creating opportunity for the youth creates a brighter future for all”.¹⁰

VCD started with 13 members and began to teach English to younger children in Chanleas Dai Commune free of charge. When asked why this group decided to establish VCD, Chhunly explains: *“PEPY and the Child Clubs are not staying forever, so we want a local NGO to develop our village and ourselves. We saw that the children in our village cannot speak English like the children in the city. We want to help them. We ourselves take extra classes to learn but that is not action. It's not only about English, it's about leadership as well. We want to see our community change and improve. We want to make good communication with children from one village to another.”*

Sayorn, a 17 year-old student in grade 11 at Kralanh High School comments: *“It is important for young people to speak English and be leaders because that helps them to find a job. Young people in my community want to study at University and get a job. It is more difficult for girls. Girls just stay at home. They get married and their husband gives them some money and they cook and clean. That is what my grandmother always thought but I told her many times that girls can change the world, can change their country. Now my family wants me to study and pay for my transport to school. If we could explain to people more about the value of the girl that would be good. We need to encourage girls to study higher and give them opportunities.”*

After one year, the VCD team had grown to over 50 volunteers, with community development projects ranging from the English program to gardening and the performing arts. VCD were awarded a small office by the Commune Chief of Chanleas Dai and have established their own website and Facebook page. They also conduct field visits and team bonding activities:

“All our team members have to provide energy, ideas, resources, and time to make VCD function. Therefore, the team dynamic is very important to our success. During Khmer New Year in 2011, we took the children on a trip to Angkor Wat. The goal of this trip was to

¹⁰ <http://yvcd.wordpress.com/>

improve the relationships between the youth from the different villages, while also giving them a chance to see a national symbol. We cooked together, and after lunch we played many traditional Khmer games. The children bonded through the games, village differences put aside. People walking by joined in as well, creating a festive atmosphere and showing the children the benefits of cooperation. We then held a team meeting. Most of our members were proud of the work they were doing and eager to do more.”¹¹

Volunteers for Community Development began at no prompting from NGO or local authority members. In was, and has stayed, a youth-led initiative. However, VCD members cite their experiences with Child Club activities, and the role models of the team who facilitated activities as being their inspiration to begin the organization.

Related impacts

Around the same time that VCD began to form, Young Leader Clubs were introduced into five villages in the commune. These clubs were intended to provide a forum and learning opportunities for those young people who were becoming too old for the topics covered in the Child Clubs. The Young Leader clubs were targeted at young people aged 15-25 and while they didn't follow the Child-to-Child methodology in the same manner, they still used participatory techniques to deal with more ideas such as team building and goal setting in a more adult way.

These clubs were not as successful as the Child Clubs as many young people of that age migrate to Thailand, and if not, have greater demands on their time due to school pressure and family responsibility. Club attendance was frequently low in some villages, and some clubs closed entirely due to non-attendance. This project only ran for 2 years, unlike the five years of Child-to-Child.

However, within these two years, while the engagement with the topics covered would not necessarily be deemed a success, there were two clear leaps forward in the leadership capacity of the young people.

Khea's story

Khea, youth club member in Preah Lean village, was asked by her mother stop studying and urged to go to Thailand. As she still wished to study at school, she tried to persuade her mother otherwise, but could not get her agreement. She raised this issue with club members, asking for help. Club members in Preah Lean village joined together to explain to Khea's mother the benefits of continuing to study and asked for Khea to be allowed to continue to study. Finally, the mother acknowledged the commitment of her daughter and her daughter's friends, and allowed Khea to continue to study, but, as a compromise, suggested that during vacation periods, she should go to Thailand with her mother. Khea, happy with this decision, is still committed to her studies.

Run Youth Club

In Run village, the youth club now no longer needs to be facilitated by an adult. The students have created their own action plan for the year, setting out what they want to learn and achieve together. They then ask support from the facilitator as and when is needed for information, resources, and training. They support their peers who are less capable and also show a strong desire to continue improving their club. While this club was not youth initiated like VCD, it has become youth-led due to the level of engagement from the participants.

¹¹ <http://yvcd.wordpress.com/v-c-d-journal/>

Somphois attends Run Youth Club. He attends because he feels it is very important for young people to build their confidence and leadership. He wants to see young Cambodians – especially in rural Cambodia – value learning instead of moving away to work in other countries. He wants them to be good role models in their community. For Somphois, the youth clubs encourage him how to think, how to work in a team and how to be good to other people. Somphois explains about Run Clubs plans for this year:

“We have many plans. We want to put up posters about the importance of keeping a clean environment in the pagoda before Khmer New Year to encourage people to put rubbish in their bins at that time. During Khmer New Year we will play traditional Khmer games to raise awareness of these traditions and also develop good communication between young people. We will take pictures of our activity and show them to people in our village so they understand.”

Run youth club have developed their own vision and mission:

Vision: that older generations will see the potential of young people

Mission: to encourage and promote thinking and leadership skills in young people

These welcome outcomes were not anticipated in the design of the project, but clearly demonstrate a growth in the ability of young people as leaders over the last few years.

Conclusions

Moving forward

In evaluating these developments in Chanleas Dai, it became apparent that these activities should no longer be “project led” and can be transitioned over to youth leadership in consultation with the young people involved. This was not an anticipated outcome of the original project, but one that has instead given a lot of insight into possible methods to develop leadership in young people in rural areas.

Give young people opportunities to lead

Young people will continue to drop out of school and migrate for labor unless there are other viable alternatives for them, or they feel they can make changes within their own country. As demonstrated by this study, these changes do not necessarily need to be nation-wide, or even at a provincial level. The simple act of teaching other students English gave young people a sense of responsibility and ownership over the development of their community. Opening up a greater range of opportunities for young people in rural areas to be involved in community decision making is vital in order to ensure they will have a voice in future at higher level.

Allow young people to fail

When conducting a “Clean environment” project, many club participants noted that while community members would organize their rubbish well for 3-4 months, after that they would return to littering. The club members had to reanalyze their activities and plan how to consistently address this problem. Failures such as these ensure not only that young people develop problem solving and creativity skills, but also that they learn how to address and cope with failure as individuals and as a group.

Connect young people with information and opportunities to gain new skills

It is also essential that opportunities made available to young people in urban areas are also translated in some way to rural areas. Practically this might not always be possible, but as such a large proportion of young people are rural dwellers, projects must start being designed to take this population mass into consideration when trying to achieve strategic goals such as those set out in the national policy for young people.

Give young people the freedom to develop their own initiative and ideas

The most successful outcomes (VCD) of this project were those that came out of young people's own motivations and ideas. Creating situations which encourage young people to think for themselves, rather than receive instruction, can encourage this kinds of developments.

Encourage young people to identify their passions

Ensuring that the focus of the clubs was on issues identified by the young people themselves is not only a way of understanding what is important to young people, but is also way of ensuring their commitment. There is more energy and motivation behind activities that are in line with what people strongly believe in.

Invest in people

The project outlined in this study had a relatively low equipment cost, but a higher human resource and training cost. While there were challenges in recruiting and training facilitators, it was demonstrated that by investing in their capacity, they were then encouraged to invest in the young people they were working with. This was found to be a more effective use of funds than in buying equipment for young people to use to complete their activities.

Create role models

Young people are inspired by their peers who have done it before them. As the older generation was deprived of basic education and was taught with sheer brutality not to question or seek change, this young generation has few role models for this kind of activity to look up to. Those role models that exist can be connected with young people in rural communities, and those young people who are taking action themselves should be encouraged to in turn support the development of those coming behind them.

Organizations such as Khmer Talks show the success of this model.¹² This community of young Cambodians based in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap believe that “through sharing, we hope to promote ideas and create opportunities for scholarly thinking, personal achievement, and business success....At this critical time in the history of our nation, the sharing of ideas, experiences, and working together collaboratively, is essential to bring out the best we have to offer for ourselves, our children, the world, and generations to come.”

Future challenges

In supporting the development of youth leadership in rural Cambodia, it is important to be aware of the ever growing generation gap between those who lived through the Khmer Rouge and those who were born after the regime fell. Disparities in education level and

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/khmertalks/info>

exposure to global culture and technology are just some of the many ways in which these two generations are struggling to connect.

One telling comment some parents of children who attended the Child Clubs in Chanleas Dai was that they felt their children were becoming “too empowered”. Another group of young revolutionaries is a terrifying prospect for the older generation, and not the progressive change that the country needs. While fostering youth leadership is critical for enabling Cambodians to shape their own future, it is critical to maintain a positive dialogue with those currently in positions of authority – whether at a family level or a national political level. This delicate negotiation is possibly the biggest challenge that young people face in determining their future.

Considering project goals or expected outcomes

Child Clubs and Youth Clubs weren’t started to generate organizations like VCD, or intended to result in young people taking full ownership of the clubs. They were started to promote leadership and critical thinking and as a holistic approach to a variety of development issues within Chanleas Dai. However, the formation of VCD and the evolution of clubs like Run are certainly the greatest successes of the project. Yet, these outcomes are very difficult to design for as their whole success is in the fact that they are youth-initiated. It is important to recognize that in projects working with young people in this way that the outcomes might not always be obvious. They may manifest in different ways and bring different benefits to the community that originally intended. It is difficult in the development world to design projects with this degree of flexibility. The “see what happens” approach is not generally applauded. The outcomes of this project suggest that perhaps it is important to promote the idea that projects dealing with outcomes that can be difficult to quantify – such as leadership – should be perceived as more open-ended. In trying to plan outcomes, we forget that sometimes the best outcomes can’t be planned. The challenge is to design projects that are transparent and accountable but can also allow for and delight in the unexpected.

Thinking about scale

The young people participating in these clubs do not have grand dreams. They are bound by the own experiences – and by their realistic understanding of their world. They, perhaps more than national, international and governmental organizations understand the value of incremental change. They see their contribution as being small, but they are still fiercely passionate about the value of that contribution. As Chhunly gave the example of his clean village, and Somphois wants to show photos to other children to build awareness of their activities, these young people firmly believe that starting small can still, over time, create large scale change. They are aware that after three months the community starts littering again. They know that their friends move to Thailand. They are probably more realistic about the challenges of development. And yet, they still value the small steps that can be taken. In trying to prove success and results, often NGOs are forced to think about large scale change. The example of these young leaders forces us to recognize that changing even one mind is, in fact, a massive success – and who knows where that small change will lead in the years to come.