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NGO EDUCATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CAMBODIA

NGO-Sponsored Education and the Development of the
Local Civil Society Sector in Cambodia

Monica Escamilla

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of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

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Abstract

In Cambodia, as in many other post-conflict countries, civil society is weak and poorly developed. Following thirty years of violent civil unrest, the country remains scarred politically and socially. Relations between government and local communities are tenuous, and the capacity for civic participation in the development and implementation of community-based social programs is severely limited. Consequently a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are striving to strengthen Cambodian civil society and to enhance the capacity of local communities to engage effectively with government institutions. This thesis presents the results of an ethnographic case study of two NGO-sponsored educational programs that are striving to strengthen local civic capacity and to foster productive democratic relationships between community leadership and local government officials. The study highlights the potential for strengthening Cambodian civil society in circumstances characterized by deep-seated socio-cultural traditions, post-war undercurrents of resistance to modernization, and abiding suspicion of government authorities.

Keywords: Civil Society, Education, NGOs, Development, Fragile State, Cambodia, Culture

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Acronyms

ADFS	Agriculture Development and Food Security
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BNFE	Basic and Non Formal Education
CA	Civil Associations
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CDRI	Cambodian Development Resource Institute
CS	Civil Society
DiDaCa	Disabled Day Care
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EDPD	Education and Development Project for the Disabled
EFA	Education for All
ESL	English as a Second Language
HEPER	Health Education Prevention and Emergency Relief
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MA	Masters of Arts
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports
MTCAD	Mobile Training Centre for Agriculture Development
NEP	NGO Education Partnership

NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPRD	National Program to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia
PIME	Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh
UN	United Nations
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
VIDES	Voluntariato Internazionale Donna Educazione Sviluppo

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INTRODUCTION

Development is recognized as the transformation of the old systems of the society: a move from traditional ties, traditional ways of thinking, traditional methods of dealing with health and education, and traditional ways of production, to move to more modern ways of doing things. To achieve this transformation, education is recognized as a pre requisite (Kao Kim, 1998). The modern world of the 21st century is characterized by democratic political systems, and an education that will prepare individuals for the knowledge-based economy that together rule the globalized world in which we live, at least in theory. Democratic states promote the political engagement of its citizens, a democratic political culture, and a well developed network of autonomous, private associations as understood in the concept of civil society (Wong, 2008). The concept of democracy as a universal commitment that is unconstrained by geography or culture is relatively new. Unlike the 19th century, discourse on whether a country was “fit for democracy,” the prevailing view in the twentieth century is that a country has to become “fit through democracy” (Wong, 2008).

The Case of Cambodia: Not Fully Democratic, nor Fully Developed

Cambodia is a South East Asian country that has dramatically changed forms of government many times during the past hundred of years. From being a French protectorate at the beginning of the 20th century, the country moved to a Socialist-Buddhist monarchy, followed by a Republic, to extreme Communism, to foreign imposed Communism, to liberal Democracy, and none of these changes had been peaceful (Chandler, 2008). It is not surprising that democracy is a new concept for Cambodians, and both the government and society have to learn about the concept and its ideas from the initial stages (Un, 2006). This learning has been filled with tensions between traditional and modern influences among the

governing elite, the citizens, and the weight of a socio-cultural past that enmeshes with the development of the imperatives of global modernity (Ayres, 2000; Hughes & Ojendal, 2006).

After a succession of very dismal years for Cambodia, which included a civil war from 1970-1975, a genocidal communist regime from 1975-1979, and an imposed Vietnamese communism from 1979-1989, the UN (United Nations) arrived to the country in 1991 upon the signing of the Paris Peace Accords. The UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) was set as a transition authority with the goal of bringing peace to the country, organizing fair elections and introducing democracy as the new political system. Since then, some progress towards social and political development has been achieved with immense support from the international community (Ayres, 2003; Downie & Kingsbury, 2001; Velasco, 2004). A more detailed chronology of events and their impacts in modern Cambodia can be found in the Literature Review chapter following this introduction.

Social Change and Western Style Development: Caught Between Tradition and Modernity

Given the fact that Democracy and civil society are Western concepts¹, there is a conflict between the Western and Eastern ways of viewing the world* The West is usually engaged in the mission of promoting the values of democracy such as liberty, equality, justice, rule of law, participation, and accountability. In a very traditional Eastern Asian country such as Cambodia, the people tend to be indifferent if not opposite to such values. Instead, peace and harmony, fixed gender and social roles, respect for authority, passive acceptance of fate, and a patron-client system of relationships are the norm.

¹ Western countries referred to countries in North America, Europe, and Australia

Historical facts have also influenced this process such as the legacy of war evident in the mistrust among people, the shift in values scale, and the very limited ability of Cambodians to plan to middle and long term, or to make decisions. Peter Worsley (1997) affirms that culture matters when development theory is being taking into consideration. Cambodia is a country that historically has resisted change. An example of it is the resistance to translate Khmer language into the Roman alphabet as the French attempted to do in 1941. The French intentions was that the move would mean a self-evident improvement for the already behind Cambodian culture, and a matter of time as Vietnam, Turkey, and Laos had successfully been Romanized by then. The attempt, combined with other acts that were considered by the Cambodians as an attack on the essential character of their civilization, resulted in the march of several thousands of angry Khmers, many of them Buddhist monks, in what was called the Revolt of the Parasols (Chandler, 2008; Tully, 2005). A march of Buddhist monks in orange robes and same coloured umbrellas might not be such an event, but for the docile, never activist Khmer culture, it said a lot. It set the parameter for how much they were willing to bend to the world's demand for change, and this parameter is still the current reference. More of these cultural and historical facts of contradiction in Cambodia society are described in much more detail in Chapter 3, and they are important to understand why today in 2009, eighteen years after the Peace Accords and arrival of the UN, the Western World is still very frustrated with Cambodia's slow development. Its fragile democracy, which includes a non-existent civil society sector at the grassroots level, is one of the poorest and least developed states in the world.

It is in this context that INGOs (International Non-governmental Organizations) arrived with the UN to provide support in terms of humanitarian aid, as well as physical, material, human, and financial resources. Their presence in the country has both been

praised and criticized by internal and external voices, however, the fact that they are preventing the fragile state of Cambodia from weakening more and are aiding the diffusion of democratic ideals and practices is undeniable. They do so through the services they provide, and education is the most recognized.

Education as a Tool for Development in Cambodia

Education is regarded by many authors as a tool for development. Its potential is unlimited and better explained in the Literature Review chapter. Research has focused mainly of the role of education in the post-conflict reconstruction processes, and the role of the civil society sector in strengthening fragile states and disseminating democratic principles. Still, there is a gap in academic literature about the relationship between education delivered by NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) opposed to the one delivered by the state, and the process of acculturation aimed to disseminate democratic practices in post-conflict states. This acculturation strives to build a cultural bridge between the Eastern traditional Cambodian guidelines of behaviour and the Western democratic modes of operation. These efforts encourage the country to find a balance between their traditional identity and the demands of modernity that come with being part of the current globalized world order.

With a very weak official educational system in place, INGOs that provide education in Cambodia have an immense potential to engage their beneficiaries into an acculturation process through the programs they provide. In recognition of education's potential to disseminate the democratic principles in a post-conflict Asian country, I present the ethnographic case studies of two INGOs in order to explore the central question of how it is that the interventions in the area of education delivery that those two NGOs provide in

Cambodia, contribute to the development and strengthen of a civil society sector at the grassroots level?

I argue that education, tradition, and political systems are deeply cultural issues. Therefore, it is through an acculturation and enculturation process of the Western tradition intermingled within the formal and non-formal educational programs that the NGOs promote social and ideological development within the different sectors of the Cambodian society. These organizations, rooted in the Western ideology but deeply immersed in the local lifestyle and culture, also act as connecting points between the Eastern and Western philosophies, lifestyles, and value systems. Therefore, the expected gradual move from a hard-core Eastern Cambodian towards a more Western-style approach to development and lifestyle becomes a smoother transition when the citizens are engaged within NGO activities.

The description of the NGO programs can be found in Chapters 4 and 5, where one full chapter is dedicated to each organization studied: Chapter 4 for New Humanity Cambodia and Chapter 5 for Don Bosco. The programs that each organization provides are presented including different perspectives: those of the NGO foreign staff, local staff, beneficiaries, community members, and the researcher's ethnographic experience. Each chapter addresses sub-questions related to cultural processes of change, limitations and barriers that the organization faces, people's reactions, individual and communitarian outcomes among others (for a complete list of research question and sub-questions please refer to Appendix #2). Those chapters also aim to fulfill the gap existent in literature in terms of the relationship between NGO-sponsored education and the development of the civil society sector in a fragile state.

The concluding chapter ends with a reflection on world dynamics, the lessons learned in terms of good practices on how NGO-sponsored education promotes the development of local civil society sector in Cambodia, and the importance of considering culture and context in any attempt to develop policy related to education and development. Some connections to the scholarly literature are also present in an attempt to explore the relationships among theory and praxis in the field of NGO-sponsored education and the development of the local civil society sector in a post-conflict non-Western setting.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

Much has been said and written about the civil society sector, also known as the third sector after government and the market. This section provides an overview of the civil society sector in terms of social development, its relationship with strong and weak governments, and the particular role that NGOs play strengthening it through education. Cambodia is presented as a specific example of a weak state with a very fragile civil society sector and many NGOs working towards its development through education. First, a brief historical background of the country is reviewed that will provide an overview of the cultural hallmarks that have shaped Cambodia's present, followed by the work that NGOs conduct in the country as an introduction to the research problem.

The Civil Society Sector as a Hallmark of Democracy

The civil society sector is composed of associations, institutions, and groups of civilians which are organized around shared values, in contrast to the state sector which is organized around authority, and the market sector which is based on the exchange of goods (Brown & Timmer, 2006). There is widespread misunderstanding of the term. Some of the most common mistakes include confusing the term with the concept of society as a whole; to regard it as synonymous with the NGO community; or to include within the concept market firms, as well as state and public agencies. Another misconception often made is to exclude the family unit, when the family is one of the founding structures of civil society (Ahnehier, 2004; Henderson, et al., 2007).

The civil society sector advocates for the determination of the people to insert themselves into the political discourse under the premise that “ordinary people are capable to fashion their own lives” (p. 610). It provides a counterpoint both to the state and to the citizens as individuals, and to build state-society relationships for the benefit of all the parties involved (McNutt & Boland, 2007; Chandhoke, 2000). The civil society sector provides opportunities for association and public awareness, which many times lead to the identification of common values, the rise of anti-hegemonic discourse, and the representation of minority groups in decision making (Blunkett, 2005; Finn & Malena, 2007; Van Rooy, 1998). Civil societies confer meaning, create a capacity for leadership within communities that, if nurtured, can transform promote local democracy and reshape the balance of power in favour of greater social inclusion, justice, dignity, equality of opportunity and respect (Ball & Knight, 1999; Hyden, 1997).

The civil society sector is a feature of a democratic government. Democracy is based in the Greek concept of conferring the power of governance to the people governed through elected representatives (Lidell & Scott, 2009). Therefore, the civil society sector constitutes one of the funding blocks of democracy by allowing the opportunity for the people’s voices to be raised and heard. The literature on relations between civil society and democratic political society has its roots in early liberal writings such as those of Alexis de Tocqueville (Zaleski, 2008). However they were developed significantly by 20th century theorists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba who identified the role of civil society in a democratic order as vital (Almond & Verba, 1989). They argue that the political element of many voluntary organizations facilitates better awareness and a more informed citizenry, who make better voting choices, participate in politics, and hold government more accountable as

a result. The statutes of these organizations have often been considered micro-constitutions because they introduce participants to the formalities of democratic decision making.

More recently, it has been argued that even non-political organizations in civil society are vital for democracy. This is because they build social capital, trust and shared values, which are transferred into the political sphere and help to hold society together, facilitating an understanding of the interconnectedness of society and interests within it (Leonardi et al., 1994). Other authors however, have questioned what actually is a democratic civil society. Some have noted that the civil society actors have now obtained a remarkable amount of political power without anyone directly electing or appointing them (Agnew, 2002 & Zaleski, 2008). Finally, other scholars sustain that, since the concept of civil society is closely related to democracy and representation, it should in turn be correlated with ideas of nationality and nationalism (Pollock, 2001).

Depending on their structure, range of activity, and the nature of its members involved, the civil society sector can be identified in three different organizational levels. Grassroots civil society encompasses associations in rural or urban communities that tend to have informal or minimum organization. These types of associations work directly with local authorities and other community-based organizations, in the interest of the local community. Middle range or national civil society can be regarded as associations at a provincial or national level, with professional staff and formal organizational structures, usually receiving funding from different sources and dealing mainly with issues that are general to the citizens' particularities of the country where they work. Transnational civil society is composed by international civil actors such as NGOs, social movements and advocacy networks, who work together with nation-states, intergovernmental organizations

and multinational corporations to define and learn how to solve trans-national problems (Brown & Timmer, 2006; Jorgensen, 1996).

It is important to note that civil societies can provide many public benefits and improve the lives of their members in different ways, but they cannot govern. They can organize the many voices of their members, but they cannot thrive without a system of democratic governance that balance the voices and includes them in policy making initiatives, guarantees fundamental rights, and empowers those who would otherwise be powerless (Then & Walkenhorst, 1999). It is when the state and civil society work together, that greater community motivation and empowerment can be expected as well as the development of social capacity (Chester, 2004; Khrouz, 2008; Kilpatrick & Millar, 2007).

Not only are a democratic state and civil society a precondition for each other as Chandhoke (2007) notes, but the logic of one actually constitutes the other. They cannot be uncoupled if sustainable results are desired. Usually, strong state governments recognize the advantages of working in partnership with the civil society sector. Some of the advantages for state governments that collaborate with the civil society sector can include access to a greater network of contacts and relationships that otherwise they wouldn't have access to, as well as the opportunity to channel state resources more effectively by using the human, economic, and material resources that civil societies usually have already in place. In exchange, the state government might grant tax cuts to the organizations involved, including the causes civil societies advocate for, in policy making considerations, or assisting them to expand the network of organizations and actors through diffusion (Salamon, 2003).

The Civil Society Sector and Weak States

Unfortunately, supportive and strong governments are not always the rule. Weak or fragile states are those suffering from multiple points of stress, examples include weak institutional capacity and vulnerability to conflict. In addition to the poverty of their own citizens, these countries also pose a risk of negative spillovers for their neighbours and the wider global community through the spread of conflict, organized crime, refugee flows, epidemic diseases and barriers to trade and investment. Fragile states also possess a dearth of institutional capacity with which to control corruption, or to inspire confidence among the citizens (Manor, 2007). Fragile states fail to provide security, the provision of basic services, and protection of essential civil freedoms. An inability to provide any of those three functions, creates a "capacity gap" (p.136) which can lead to a loss of public confidence and, perhaps, to political upheaval. (Eizenstat, et al., 2005).

For this capacity gap to be fulfilled, the civil society sector plays an active role. When citizens are well informed, and an environment exist that allows them to actively participate in public life, civil society actors can support the struggling government through the provision of these basic services (Chandhoke, 2007; Martin, 2002; Samuel, 2007). It is also in its role as the state watchdog, that civil society actors can prevent the weak states to further weaken , promote community development, and campaign for human rights and other advocacy issues to be considered in the government policy-related discussions (Smith & Wiest, 2007).

Goetz (2007) notes that the structural reform that many fragile and post-conflict countries are trying to implement, in order to fulfill their responsibility as states, requires more than just legislative action and the cooperation not only of line agencies and

ministries, but also at least of some segments of society. Civil society institutions that connect state and society are essential to facilitate public oversight of governmental processes, and also to negotiate the new understandings or pacts that promote institutional change. “A diverse civil society with institutions capable of developing horizontal solidarities can provide incentives to reformers by responding positively to reforms and thereby widening reformers’ support base” (p.413).

For civil society sector to effectively fulfill the previously mentioned functions, a number of pre-conditions must be satisfied. Among them, there should be a functioning state organization with some degree of social stability, democratic institutions, a sense of identity or citizenship, inclusiveness of minorities and underprivileged groups, access to information, and a middle class –usually disenchanted with the government performance– that will take initiative to organize fellow citizens with similar interests or needs and demand government consideration for collaborative work (Fowler, 1996; Jorgensen, 1996).

Experience has shown that civil society functions better on a foundation of free, autonomous subjects, and not as well in corporative, clientelistic or similar structures (Kocka, 2005). However these conditions are not always the norm, especially in post-conflict and fragile states. For many of these states, the concept of democracy is not even known in their traditional cultures. The development of the civil society sector in many cases is a slow process of acculturation, which often requires external support. It is through a democratic education process that the intellectual, material, and organizational bases of the civil society actors can be developed and improved (Naidoo & Tandon, 1999).

*Developing the Civil Society Sector in Fragile States:**The Role of NGO-Sponsored Education*

In countries where government institutions are weak, education sponsored by external agencies can contribute with bottom-up transformation as a part of the community's development. Brown et al. (2008) express the importance of development programs designed with the intention of breaking down the patron-client system of relationships still present in many societies, encouraging communities to attend to their own needs in an organized and cooperative manner. It is by developing educational programs based in the local needs and constraints, that the community will take responsibility and ownership for its implementation, converting them in active agents of the local development (Fukuyama, 2005!).

The current world order, a knowledge-based economy (OECD, 2000), requires a shift in the educational processes from rote and authoritarian learning to a student-centered more interactive and experiential approach. This shift is thought with the objective of creating institutions and social relationships that will maximize outcomes for all individuals rather than for a few (Robertson, 2005).

Educational characteristics that support the present demands of training in the young generation for the current world order and encourage the receivers of such education to abandon pedantic, authoritarian practices, include a pedagogy that focuses in the student, the participation of community members in different aspects of educational administration, the promotion of critical thinking and analysis of worth and value of traditional teachings, the promotion problem solving skills, among others (Maclure, 2000). Learning in a classroom is constantly reviewed in the light of new evidence or understandings, and

promotes the skills and capacities to influence, rather than simply react to change, especially change resulting from globalisation influences (Preece & Mosweunyane, 2006). This method of education engenders discovery, reflection and discussion instead, which are the basics of democracy. In the discourse of development aid, it is usually the non governmental organizations which have assumed the task of delivering this education with the aims of acculturating the re-emerging state population into democratic practices.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

While the concept of a civil society sector refers to the numerous forms of associational life between the state and the private realm, the NGO sector refers to a much narrower, vertically organized sub-sector of activism (Henderson et al., 2007). The distinction between NGOs from other Civil Associations (CAs) or Community Based Organizations (CBOs) is not always clear. Harper (1995) in his report on NGOs in Asian countries with a communist or socialist heritage considers the term NGO and Civil Society as interchangeable. On the other hand, Renshaw (1994) considers civil society much broader, more complex, richer concept than just the presence of NGOs. She considers NGOs as part of civil society. Furthermore, she argues that the presence of NGOs and other organizations does not guarantee the existence of a strong civil society and criticizes donors for oversimplifying the concept of civil society.

Un's (2006) definition of an NGO as "private, non-profit, organizations, with a distinctive legal character, concerned with public welfare goals and social needs" (p. 234) seems to be one of the most complete in the subject-related literature. NGOs enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are regarded as efficient and effective providers of social and other services that governments may find costlier and more inefficient when they

provide these service. As a result, cooperative relations between governments and NGOs in welfare provision have become a prominent feature in countries worldwide (Anheier, 2004). However they also generate alternative political agendas to hold state governments accountable, aiding the process of development transitions and helping to consolidate democracy (Henderson et al., 2007; Petrova, 2007; Un, 2006).

Particularly in developing countries, international NGOs have become increasingly identified as the “primary building blocks of civic development” (p. 37) and the bridge between isolated and local communities as well as global events and concerns (Henderson et al., 2007). From the perspective of national and international donor agencies, NGOs are frequently regarded as the “sure recipe for democracy” (p. 608), a safer route to canalize donor funds, and an alternative to the formal sphere of political parties (Brown, Brown and Desposato, 2007; Chandhoke, 2007; Robinson & Van Rooy, 1998). Still it is important to recognize that each of these organizations rely on host government accreditation that permits them to work at the community level with relative autonomy and some degree of effectiveness. However, in many cases NGOs face a love-hate relationship with the state institutions depending on the political and ideological situation. They work together towards common development and humanitarian goals but sometimes cast in an adversarial stance, particularly when dealing with such volatile issues as human rights, environmental concerns or the imposition of an authoritarian rule (Hodkinson & McCarthy, 1992).

Un (2006) explains that NGOs can perform two types of roles, “supply side” and “demand side,” and further contends that NGOs that perform both tasks are crucial in promoting democracy and the growth of civil society. The demand side of NGOs aims at raising people’s political consciousness. The supply side focuses on the provision of development projects such as education, health, and social services that the state cannot

fulfill (Salamon, 2003). There are however, critiques towards the work of international NGOs in the development aid agenda. Brown et al. (2008) and Fukuyama (2005) insist that NGOs may prevent the encouragement of social capital development and positive change if they successfully provide local public goods that will satisfy grievances and eliminate incentives for mobilization within the community. “You tell me your problem. I will try to see the government or the international community” cites Un (2006, p. 243) in his critique on the dependency NGOs generate in the field as a consequence of their presence.

Judging from the conventional wisdom about the responsiveness of non-governmental organizations, Herzlinger (1996) expressed that “Nonprofits are not to be trusted because they lack the three basic accountability measures that ensure effective and efficient operations in the business world: the self-interest of owners, competition and the ultimate bottom-line measure of profitability” (p. 49). The emergence of globalised elite is another critique. More closely connected to the global actors (International NGOs and donors) than to local constituencies, the organizations are usually characterised by being manipulated by a global agenda and are usually also conflicted with local forms of mass-based organization over legitimacy, resources and space in public areas (Jad 2007).

Despite of the critiques and limitations, NGOs in the past two decades have been extremely resilient and adaptable (Salamon, 2003). They are flexible in their processes and their position as intermediaries between governments, civilians and the international community allows them to be effective sponsors of acculturation processes embedded in the services they provide, being education one of the most evident. The following section describes these processes in more detail, and their importance in developing a civil society sector in a setting where democratic practices are not the norm.

*NGO Sponsored Education**Culture and Social Development*

All human beings are raised within a cultural context. Culture is understood as a learned behaviour unlike to biological reactions, and cherished by a major section of society (Radcliffe, 2006). Within the development discourse, culture matters because culture is interconnected with other social systems, some of which include economy, political life, quality of life, among others. If other components are developed within a community, development would occur but the inconsistent cultural factor creates frictions and resistance through the lack of knowledge to utilise the resources and incongruent values (Alexander & Kumara, 1992). For a number of different actors, culture represents a key factor in development outcomes, increasing the meaningfulness of interventions for project beneficiaries and the social sustainability of projects for their administrators and donors (Radcliffe, 2006).

Enculturation is the process by which a person learns the requirements of the culture by which he or she is surrounded, and acquires values and behaviours that are appropriate or necessary in that culture. If successful, enculturation results in competence in the language, values, and rituals of the culture (Grusec & Hastings, 2007). Acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous direct contact. The original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered, but the groups remain distinct (Kottak, 2005). The dynamics of acculturation include selective adoption of the value system, and the integration and differentiation processes (Rudmin, 2003). In the context of modern post-conflict states where the social networks and cultural heritage are damaged, acculturation is being used by Western

countries to blend traditional practices and inculcate democracy as a form of government and social mode of living.

Education as a Process of Enculturation and Acculturation

Education at all levels and modalities is directly associated to the three concepts of culture, enculturation and acculturation. Education is usually shaped by the local culture with the aim to enculturate its beneficiaries. Education is also one of the main tools when the values, rituals, and cultural characteristics want to be changed through the acculturation process (Clayton, 2005). In the discourse of social development, a basic requirement for development is a strong desire in a large section of society for an improved -or different- living. To such desire to arise, there are three essential requirements: motivation for achieving improved well-being, knowledge for practicing the particular pattern of life, and resources required to lead a life in accordance with the motivations and knowledge (Alexander & Kumaran, 1991). NGOs use education as a tool to provide such knowledge within post-conflict reconstruction settings that will promote social development.

Through the same education, these organizations also promote social change in terms of the values, rituals, and cultural characteristics in which the beneficiaries were enculturated. This change is possible given the fact that the outcomes of educational programs are linked not only with the individual, but with the social practices that most of the time improve in a post-conflict setting. Therefore, they contribute with the community capacity to develop (Prins, 2005).

Although it is a slow process, the effects can be quite transcendental. At the individual level, education provides knowledge, skills, and cultural identity. All of these outcomes are important to increase awareness of the surroundings and develop a cultural

identity worthy to improve through civil association (Kilpatrick & Millar, 2005). However, perhaps education's most significant contribution to the development of a civil society sector in fragile and post-conflict states is found in its social outcomes.

Education at the social level promotes values and social interaction opportunities among its beneficiaries, which contribute to the improvement of social relationships and further mutual collaboration. These effects are especially welcomed among fragmented post-conflict communities where the level of trauma, fear and mistrust that the war ideology had embedded in the people's ideas and behaviours are usually some of the main challenges to overcome (Prins, 2005). Under the premise of "children and youth need to know not only how to compete but also how to collaborate" (p.31), Schneider-Munos & Politz (2007) affirm that the best practices young students acquire through education will become the basic building blocks of the civil society sector and civic future leadership. These best practices are found in the areas of teamwork and turn-taking, sharing decision making, engagement in rights and responsibilities, understanding the diverse perspective of others, and mutually using these strengths across cultures to achieve common goals.

Community awareness has also been recognized as a direct outcome from education, specifically on the community's history, situation, needs, strengths, and factors that help or impede their sustainable development. This awareness allows the communities to exercise choices and helps them to integrate into the global socio-political order in order to ideally understand it, manage it, and challenge it locally (Alexander, 2006; Shrestha et al., 2008). Awareness combined with an increasing number of local associations and community interaction develops and strengthens the grassroots civil society sector and holds the potential for eventually creating political change from a bottom-top approach (Brown et al. 2008; McNutt & Boland, 2007).

The main two modalities of education delivery that NGOs use more frequently are formal and non-formal education. Formal education refers to the curriculum contents delivered through government certified educational institutions. NGOs that choose this modality of delivery usually are certified by the ministry of education to adopt the official curriculum and complement them with extra resources. Not only are these schools a setting to learn curriculum contents but also to develop social skills. The non-formal education (NFE) modality has emerged as a complement, an alternative, and a supplement to the formal education (Mfum-Mensah, 2003), and it is currently the most popular modality for delivering education among NGOs. In fragile and post-conflict states it is particularly valuable due to the lack of capacity of the formal system. NFE involves intentional, purposeful and structured learning opportunities provided outside the formal education system and takes as its focus learners who live in a particular location or share a particular social or educational need (Shrestha et al., 2008). Its flexibility makes it a particularly good form of education to reach the minority groups or those that are difficult to reach by the formal system. Non-formal education has an organizational structure, but not a hierarchic design.

Farazmand (1999) emphasizes the characteristics that organizations who deliver educational programs should consider in order to make the learning experience meaningful and useful for the development of a civil society sector. He sees the need for an education that helps to engage citizens in the work of public institutions while maintaining a balance between serving the community's local, national and broader interests. Such organizations should consider an education that will provide the citizens with the ability to make the most out of their available resources to benefit of their communities, becoming agents of local change (Dymess, 2002).

As a particular example, the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia is presented in the following section. A fragile state slowly recovering from several decades of war and civil unrest, with deep seated socio-cultural Eastern traditions. While slowly learning the fundamentals of democracy as the country's newest form of government, the civil society sector is weak and almost inexistent at the grassroots level. It is in this context that international NGOs deliver education that incorporates a strong acculturating orientation, as a path to develop the civil society sector and strengthen democracy in a country where such concepts are foreign and little valued.

Cambodia as a Fragile State: Historical and Cultural Background

Cambodia is a country of 14.7 million people (2008) located in South East Asia, West of Vietnam, South of Laos, and East of Thailand. The country, a parliamentary monarchy, is composed of 95% ethnic Khmers, 95% Buddhists, and 82% of the population living in the countryside (CIDA, 2009). It is also one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking in number 136th out of 179 in the UN Human Development Index (2008).

For 40 years, Cambodia has dramatically changed forms of government many times. From being a protectorate, the country moved to socialist-Buddhist monarchy, followed by a republic, to radical communism, to foreign imposed communism, to a liberal democracy, and none of these changes had been peaceful (Chandler, 2008). It is not surprising that democracy, as the current form of government, is a new concept for Cambodians, and both the government and society have to learn about the concept and its ideas from the beginning (Un, 2006). This learning has been filled with tensions between traditional and modern influences among the governing elite and the citizens, where the weight of a socio-cultural

past enmeshes with the development of the imperatives of global modernity (Ayres, 2000; Hughes & Ojendal, 2006).

Being the civil society sector a hallmark of democratic governance, it is a concept that the Cambodians are also slowly learning, not without its own challenges. Although it is easy to hold local history responsible for many of today's social and political shortcomings in Cambodia, it is also important to understand the origins of these problems that categorize the country as a fragile state and one of the poorest in the world. This section presents an overview of the Cambodian chronology, highlighting the precursors of the civil society sector.

Memories of an Empire

Unified in the 7th century, the Kingdom of Angkor represents Cambodia's glorious past. Extending from the current Cambodia's territory and parts of Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos, Angkor was the rule on South East Asia in those days of splendour, and it remains today a symbol of Cambodian and Khmer nationalism (Gottesman, 2004). The villages were formed of mostly kin members and were isolated geographically from other villages, all living self-sufficient lives. According to Chandler (2008), there were no efficient voluntary organizations in villages apart from the family and the Buddhist monastic orders. The structure of society was hierarchical, ruled by patron-client relationships, and a King who had the simultaneous status of a God (devaraja) at the top of the power pyramid with absolute power and authority.

Spontaneous single-issue movements of the 19th century can be considered as precursors for civil society in Cambodia. By the 19th century, the central government of the empire was already weak, and people occasionally organized protests against foreign

interventions, but not against their own monarchic government. When people protested, the monarch tended to resolve problems with by allying themselves with the Kingdom of Siam (today's Thailand) or the Vietnamese dynasties (Yonekura, 1999). This pattern of problem-solving still remains today and has had significant effects in terms of neighbouring relationships. Most of the governance conflicts were directly related with Vietnam, and Cambodians usually refer to these periods to justify their fear for Vietnamese expansion and ethnic discrimination (Gottesman, 2004).

Cambodia as a French Protectorate

In 1863, as an offer for protection against Vietnamese and Thai annexation threats, France proclaimed a protectorate over the Cambodia territory. The French idea was to keep the territory as a buffer between Siam and Vietnam, and soon enough it took control over its administration, financial, legal, and commercial systems. The French authorities built roads, cities, schools, and modernized the Cambodian economy (Gottesman, 2004).

Although the monarchy was retained in the person of King Norodom Sihanouk, the French rule was indirectly exercised through advisers whose word was final on major subjects (Chandler, 2008). However, in the everyday life, the French had little or non impact in the Cambodia's society, who were more interested in their rice cultivation and their Buddhist lifestyle. They continued to pay taxes to a higher authority as they had always done, supporting the lifestyle of an elite whom they rarely saw and with whom they had little in common (Ayres, 2000).

During this period that lasted until 1953, some anti-French protests grew into a nationalist movement calling for independence. French rule caused the germination of prototypes for civil associations. The French suppressed such protests, but they were the

prelude to a nationalist resentment, which, blending with the newly formed Cambodian elite, paved the way to independence movement (Chandler, 2008).

Independent Cambodia

Independence was granted in 1953 and the “Buddhist socialism era” (p. 449) began. King Norodom Sihanouk committed up to 20% of the national budget for formal education, which he believed was the vehicle to modernize his country. Many schools at all levels opened and most children had secure access to elementary education (Ayres, 2000). In 1970 Sihanouk was ousted by General Lon Nol, imposing a republican government backed by the United States fighting the Vietnamese communists in the neighbouring country. A 5-year long civil war started between the new republic and exiled King Sihanouk, who reacted by allying himself with his former sworn enemies, the communist guerrillas known as the Khmer Rouge (Tully, 2005).

The civil war brought devastation to the economy, increasing the country’s dependence on U.S. aid. It was during this period of time that the socio-economic gap between poor and rich people intensified, same as the widespread of corruption through the government elite, which became a common critique across the press, until the government completely banned the private press in March 1973 (Yonekura, 1999).

Communist Cambodia

In 1975 the city of Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge who immediately took over the tasks of transforming the country into an agricultural communist utopia (Ayres, 2000). Traditional divisions in society were simply exterminated. Cities were evacuated, foreigners exiled, the elites physically annihilated, and families separated through the enforced division

of family members and removal of children into collective care and mobile work units. Young people and children were given authority over older people, a paradigm shift in the social order that had never been seen before in such a hierarchical traditional country such as Cambodia. Children were encouraged to spy on their parents, destroying trust even at the family nuclear level (Ayres, 2000; Pin, 1987). Angkar (the organization), as the Khmer Rouge called their administrative regime, completely controlled a society based on new divisions in which freedom of expression was absolutely annihilated and all supposed disagreements with the regime often led to their systematic death.

Under the new regime, which named itself Democratic Kampuchea in 1976, the country went on a self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world. There were no telephone lines, no telegrams, cable or mail. International flights were forbidden except for official visits back and forth to Beijing and Hanoi. The borders were closed and foreigners were not allowed except for a few Chinese advisors (Gottesman, 2004). Within the country the communications and regular life were also cut. Currency, markets, and privately owned goods were taken over by the regime, as was the distribution of the food. Cooperatives ate together and forced to communist indoctrination sessions. Survivors recall eating a diet of riceless gruel, scorpions, tarantulas and roots, and consequently diseases that came with them: diarrhea, dysentery, typhoid, and malaria. No medicine was available and no complain was even heard due to the fear of being executed under the charge of disloyalty to the revolution (Pin, 1987; Tully, 2005).

Buddhist monks were forced to defrock and work in the fields, religious rites were forbidden, pagodas desecrated and destroyed, books burned or shredded. Cambodians, except for Khmer Rouge cadres, worked in the fields through the daylight hours and many part of the country much longer, depending on the cadre in charge (Chandler, 2008; Criddle,

1998; Gottesman, 2004). The Khmer Rouge detached the Cambodians from all they held dear: their families, their food, their fields and their faith. They transformed the whole country into a vast slave labour camp (Ponchaud, 1977). Although the numbers are not exact and different authors make different estimations, it is calculated that one third of the population, then around 8 million people, died of execution, starvation, diseases or overwork (Haynes 2009; Tully, 2005).

In 1978, as a response to continuous provocations, the Vietnamese launched a full scale invasion pushing the Khmer Rouge to the Thai Border. The Vietnamese occupied Cambodia until 1989 and installed a new government with the few educated survivors and some other imported professionals. Tully (2005) describes: "There were virtually no professionals or skilled workers. The people were in rags, wondering shoeless in a state where they did not speak or smile anymore. Fear was their constant companion after living so long with death at their heels" (p.200). After living to see the end of the Khmer Rouge regime, between 325,000 and 625,000 people died within the first year of liberation, most of them of starvation. Movements of people were all over looking for relatives, seeking to return to their home or for a safe haven in the Thai border refugee camps.

The Vietnamese started rebuilding the country waiving taxes on crops for the first few years. Vietnamese engineers and technicians re-started electricity and water supply plants, and the Thai baht was used until the Cambodian Riel was printed again. In the countryside, the government allowed private farming but made some tentative steps towards collectivisation by organizing peasants into *krom samakki*, or production solidarity groups, and by setting up a number of model villages in which work was done on a cooperative basis (Roberts, 2003; Tully, 2005).

Although the country's reconstruction slowly started, freedom of associations or expression was not allowed, excepting for state-controlled organizations (Yonekura 1999). It is likely that community organization initiatives imposed by the Vietnamese in the 1980s, failed due to the reaction against all forms of organization that could be seen to be similar to that which was vigorously enforced during the Khmer Rouge regime (Gottesman, 2004; Kamm 1998).

Despite the fact that the country was totally destroyed and its remaining population starving, the international community held an aid embargo to the country condemning the Vietnamese communist occupation (Ayres, 2000). By the late 1980s, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Countries) countries had begun to warm towards Vietnam and Cambodia as it became apparent that they had no plans (or capacity) to export revolution to the rest of the region. The final Vietnamese withdrawal occurred in September 1989, leaving the country modestly reconstructed. The tragedy, as Tully (2005) expresses, is that "it took 13 weary years before the international community could agree on a solution to a problem they were largely responsible for creating in the first place" (p. 217).

Modern Cambodia

The end of the Cold War meant the voluntary withdrawal of Vietnam forces from Cambodia soil on 1989, and The Paris Peace Agreement was signed in October 1991 by Cambodia's four warring factions. This Agreement brought along an electoral law and a constitution. The UNTAC (United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia) was established to supervise the administration of the country and to organize free elections in 1993. With the UNTAC, a large number of NGOs arrived in the country, bringing with them a flow of humanitarian and financial aid for reconstruction (Un, 2006).

These democratic procedures however, did not automatically make Cambodia a liberal democracy. Cambodia qualifies into the category of countries who have adopted what Peou (2000) calls a neo-authoritarianism which is characterized by hostile thinking towards Western liberalism and their very own “alternative cultural baggage” (p.5) that neither prefer autonomy, nor do they seek equality. Elections take place but they are conducted to promote stability through the legitimization of the ruler’s right to govern, not to promote individual freedom. These types of countries are stable but free and fair competition does not exist in any meaningful way, which adds on to the characteristics that also portray Cambodia as a fragile state.

To establish a civil society in the aftermath of armed conflict is as difficult as to finish the war itself (Meas, 2000). In the process of reconstruction, Cambodians were treated as victims rather than participants and partners by the UN and the same international community that ignored their pleas when they needed it the most. The Cambodian resourcefulness and the hard-won achievements of the 1980s were ignored and the current government was not integrally involved in the planning and implementation of reconstruction and development activities initiated by international development agencies and NGOs during the UNTAC years. This underestimation led to a loss of confidence in their own capacity to manage the process and it reinforced rather than alleviated dependence in foreign aid to solve their problems (Godfrey et al. 2000; Mysliwiec 2003).

Still, not all the aspects of the international community presence have been negative in Cambodia’s post-conflict reconstruction. It has been with its support that some progress has been achieved in terms of small steps towards development and understanding the concept and practice of democracy (Ayres, 2003; Downie & Kingsbury, 2001; Velasco, 2004). One of these achievements has been the Cambodian government acknowledgment of

the importance of human resources as the gateway to state development in the social, economic, and political areas. “Human resources are the key to competing economically with our ASEAN neighbours and the world” affirmed Keat Chhon in his 1998 opening discourse as Senior Minister of Economic Rehabilitation and Development (Ayres, 2003, p. 242).

Following this acknowledgement, the National Program to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia (NPRD) was launched with a special emphasis on education as the main tool for human resources development. The Structural Adjustment Agreement between the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the Cambodian government was signed in 1994, promising a total reform of the country and its institutions. However, the road to good governance is difficult, especially in a state with so many shortcomings as Cambodia at the time. Ayres (2003) highlights the fragile state category to which Cambodia belongs to, through acknowledging elite attitudes towards such Structural Agreements: “The Cambodian government, after signing the agreement and accepting the funding that accompanied it, effectively ignored it” (p.249)

Starting in the year 2000 however, some initiatives to promote decentralization, as a characteristic of democratic governance, have been implemented by the government. These initiatives have been designed with the purpose of delegating the power and to give people a more active role as doers and shapers of their own development. They also aim to promote good governance according to Western standards, accountability and better service (Pellini, 2005). One example of such efforts is the elected Commune Councils which replaced state-appointed Commune Chiefs at the village leadership level. This shift marked a sharp change from the practices of the past. A key element from this initiative was the involvement of citizens in local planning and decision-making processes for the first time in the country’s

history. This was a two-way affair, as the commune councils were mandated to inform their constituents about their activities, and the citizens were encouraged to become active participants in local governance.

Unfortunately the results were not the expected, because the government, the local leadership, nor the recently elected Commune Council were not aware of the roles each of them should have played in regards to civil social participation opportunities, which has never been the norm in Cambodian culture (Ayres & Pellini, 2007). Some other examples of power decentralization initiatives include the “cluster schools” to manage public schools at the district level, and the “Village Networks” to encourage citizens to build links among themselves towards civil participation in the local governance process (Ayres & Pellini, 2007; Pellini, 2005).

The previously described examples are a reminder of how much work still has to be done in achieving citizen engagement in Cambodia (Ayres & Pellini, 2007). Some authors including Tully (2005) even affirm that Cambodia has no civil society, with no stable groups between the family and the state. Chandler (2008) notes that some forms of social organizations, if they exist, tend to be of a temporary nature, for example the occasions when villages would work together to fight bandits or to organize festivals. It is in this process of helping the Cambodian fragile government to adopt and disseminate among its people foreign concepts, such as democracy, social participation and civil society, that NGOs found their mission through the services that they provide.

NGO-sponsored Education as Civil Society Sector Builder in Cambodia

NGOs working in Cambodia provide basic education and accessibility to geographically marginalized children (Sokhom, 2004), partner with state departments to

fund and administer programs that will allow more girls to have access to education (Velasco, 2004), promote peace and reconstruction through grassroots and middle-level programs (Ngarm, 2004), strengthen the participation of communities in educational matters, making school more children-friendly, and funding eco-clubs (Pellini, 2005), among other activities. They also have engaged in the promotion of human rights and the rule of law through training and education. In fact, using Khmer traditional concepts such as Buddhism as a form of transmission in training and education campaigns, these organizations have introduced new concepts of human rights, the rule of law and accountability to Cambodian society (Un, 2006).

While NGOs focusing on community development did not figure prominently in Cambodian society in the past, there is evidence of some of such organizations dating back to the early days of the regime of the young King Sihanouk and even before. Cambodia's first Boy Scout troop was founded in 1934, the National Mutual Help Association dates back to 1949. The Cambodian Red Cross was founded in 1951, the Women's Mutual Health Association in 1953, and ethnic groups, like the Association of Vietnamese in Cambodia, date to the 1950s.

The modern Cambodian NGOs began in the Thai refugee camps between 1975 and 1990. Some of the first generations of NGO leaders already had some exposure to INGOs providing formal and non-formal training in such camps. They started to become involved and formulated ideas and analyse action plans that would form the foundations of organizations devoted to community-based development in rebuilding their country once they could go back (Barton, 2001). With the arrival of the UNTAC in 1991, INGOs established themselves in the country while providing humanitarian aid for post-conflict reconstruction and funded the building blocks for the Cambodian civil society sector at the

national scope. Some authors affirm that those donors and NGOs have fostered the creation of further evolution of national NGOs as the framework for the emergence of an organized Cambodian civil society (Downie & Kingsburg, 2001; Roberts, 2003; World Bank 2005). However, for a civil society sector capable of advocating for poor and marginalized groups through the delivery of services, the presence of NGOs is not enough, as some internal organization is needed as well, not strong enough yet in the Cambodian context.

In 2001, Downie & Kingsbury identified four categories in which Cambodian NGOs operated. They were issue-orientated, which include trade unions, research institutions, think-tanks, women's groups, and student associations. There were professional/occupational, which include legal, educational, medical, business and the media. The value-/religious-based, advocate for the human rights through spirituality; and the disadvantage-based, concerned with the handicapped, vulnerable, cultural, human rights, ethnic minorities, and rural credit. Although a small number of NGOs were involved in business or were instruments of political parties, the intentions of most NGO leaders were to help contribute to peace-building, nation-building, promotion of human rights, and advancement of democracy.

There is debate on the question of the role of NGOs in Cambodia. It is questioned if they constitute the basis of the civil society sector there or not. Un (2006) describes the role that NGOs in Cambodia have played in being watchdogs of the state through their extensive monitoring programmes. He sustains that NGOs identify and help victims of human rights violations assisting victims of political violence, land grabbing and human trafficking. They do this by helping the individuals to file court cases and/or complaints to the appropriate authorities, an approach that already includes a relationship between civilians and official institutions. Ayres & Pellini (2007) sustain that NGOs have also played an intermediary role

between government institutions and community members, establishing the basis of an engaged civil society, as illustrated in the Village Networks Mechanisms. These Village Networks Mechanisms are a decentralization initiative with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)² where the NGOs take the role of facilitators, trainers and supervisors of operations in building capacity within local community groups to promote active participation in local governance.

Downie & Kingsbury (2001) describe the way in which NGOs have distinguished themselves for organizing seminars, forums, lectures, and panel discussions as venues for the public airing of opinions and experiences, and for formulating strategies and plans. These activities, they claim, have been important in strengthening local civil society and are an example of political development in action. The World Bank (2005) reports that villagers who were asked if they had received any form of assistance or benefit from actors outside their village of residence, cited NGO projects far more often than they cited government service providers. NGOs have recorded considerable success in delivering both basics goods and services and in imparting knowledge and ideas on topics such as human rights, domestic violence and health practices.

On the other hand, there are contrary opinions, such as Smoke's (2005), who argues that most of these international NGOs tend to not interact extensively with the local government, especially in the area of results sustainability. This lack of interaction reduces the opportunity of building a civil society sector to a group of organizations working in the same country for their individual objectives. Hughes (2003, cited by Un, 2006) points out that donors usually have their own agenda, which consist of promoting international perspectives in developing countries. These concerns usually overlook the significance of

² INGO that supports the German Government in achieving its development-policy objectives

building a genuine civil society characterized by volunteerism and a close relationship between NGOs and grassroots activists.

For the civil society sector to develop at the grassroots level there are several other challenges. Some of these challenges include the distrust that exists among the population towards organizations in general and towards the government. Formal civil associations or organizational tradition has never been a long-established Cambodian practice which is reflected in the low priority that these type of activities represent for the locals (Downie & Kingsbury, 2001).

To support the few civil organizations that are slowly emerging, Hock Guan (2004) advises that both the government and civil society activists need to have a better understanding of the exact role of the civil society sector. He suggests that a legal framework for associations and NGOs to work within would help to establish some standard guidelines, and hopefully encourage more co-ordination among civil organizations and avoid that they become controlled by political interests. This is and will continue to be a slow process. However, it is by teaching communities the principles of active participation, accountability and responsibility the only hope to transform a culture of demand into a culture of initiative and participation in Cambodia (Pellini, 2005)

The development of the Civil Society sector is a slow process. Especially in post-conflict and fragile states not always there is the social organization or resources needed to support the attempts. Given the fact that the civil society sector is a concept directly linked with the local culture in terms of relationships between civilians, groups, and government, ruled by cultural norms and supported –or not- by cultural traditions, its study and development have cultural implications, cultural variations, and cultural facts to take into account.

Since education is also a cultural undertaking, it is important to remember that the process is deeply affected by the local culture, beliefs, traditions, and facts that Western funded NGOs have not always fully understood or taken into account. Until now, the existing research in the areas of education in Cambodia is mostly of historical nature or focused in the development of moral values. There is some literature on the challenges that democracy has faced in the past 20 years, and vast amounts on the effects of the Khmer Rouge years in today's reconstruction efforts. Some praises and critiques regarding NGOs working in the country are also found. However there is no literature available that connects the challenges of international NGOs face in terms of cultural differences with the development of a civil society sector, and the role that education plays in it. Even less at the grassroots level.

This research study looks at the interventions of two international NGOs providing formal and non formal education in rural and urban Cambodia. These NGOs contribute, mostly indirectly, to the development of the civil society sector at the grassroots level through the educational programs they provide. The particular focus of this research project is on the acculturation practices that are promoted within each program as well as the effects in the beneficiaries. The following chapter describes the methodology used to conduct the study that will answer the question "How does NGO-sponsored education develops and strengthens the local civil society sector in Cambodia?".

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

In this chapter I present the research methodology employed for this project. The first section explains the rationale of the research topic and for using a qualitative approach, with an ethnographic case studies paradigm. The next section discusses the data collection methods divided in two subsections, one for each of the organizations I am studying as individual cases. Following the data collection, the data analysis methods are presented. Given the fact that the same data analysis process was employed for both organizations I am presenting the information as one single section. Lastly, an assessment of the credibility of the research, researcher bias, and limitations are presented.

Qualitative Research

Due to the focus of the study is on the assistance processes that NGOs are providing to a particular culture, and I attempted to gain an understanding of the field of study, not to test a hypothesis, therefore a qualitative approach is appropriate (Schram, 2006). The lack of literature regarding NGOs' role in Cambodia's re-construction after three decades of war, specifically in the area of education confirms the need for this type of exploratory studies.

Within the framework of qualitative inquiry this study draws on both ethnographic and case study approaches to meet the research goals. Ethnography seeks to explore, describe and interpret the shared patterns of values and behaviours of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2007). In this case, I explored the interactions of Cambodians as a particular group with their social and cultural particularities by spending four months on site living the local life (McMillan, 2000; Le Compte & Schensul, 1999). The aim is to develop

a cultural portrait of the country and to describe the interventions that two international NGOs perform through the educational programs they provide and the impact of such interventions in the construction of a civil society sector at the grassroots level. Case studies seek to “study an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (Creswell, 2007, p.73).

In this instrumental case I elaborate an in-depth analysis of the educational programs that the two international NGO provide, in a particular setting -either the countryside or the capital city in Cambodia-, involving specific social groups -such as marginalized, poor or at risk communities- and bounded by place and time, with the purpose to obtain detailed information and understanding of two particular cases. Therefore, this study can also be regarded as an ethnographic case study (Merriam, 1988). These two cases are represented by the two NGOs I worked with: New Humanity and The Salesians of Don Bosco Foundation. It is instrumental because these two cases can facilitate the understanding of the processes of social development on which the research project focuses (Schram, 2006). The complete research proposal was reviewed and approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (Appendix 5) and the interview consent forms and protocols are presented as Appendices 3 and 4.

The Participants and Setting

The NGOs selected as the research setting and cases to be studied were New Humanity and Don Bosco Foundation. Gaining access to the organizations and information was not difficult. My introduction to the NGO world in Cambodia was through the Catholic Church, to which I belong. Although none of the NGOs knew much about me, the fact of being “one of them” opened the access for me to submit a formal request (Flick, 2006). I

proposed that the outcomes of my volunteer services and academic research would be beneficial for their organizations in exchange for board and access to the data. Both NGOs accepted the agreement and I quickly became one more expatriate working for the cause.

The selection criteria for the two cases among all the NGOs related with the Catholic church was based on their availability to have me on site conducting the research, and on their representation of the other Cambodian NGOs. This representation is present in the array of issues the organizations' programs target, such as their combined focus on women, students at the basic and post-secondary level, human rights, agricultural and health issues, morality, and their evident concern with the disabled and vulnerable. My interaction with the Cambodians in all the rungs of their social ladder would commonly lead to a close, trusting relationship, circumstance that is commonly a goal of ethnographers, but also of persons from close-knit community cultural backgrounds such as my own. This context created conditions for lessening the distance between myself as researcher and the participants, a condition highly valued, and even deemed essential to credible and trustworthy qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1988).

Data Collection

Access to the participants and information was facilitated through my role of temporary volunteer NGO staff, first with the program managers in New Humanity and teachers with Don Bosco and then with the direct beneficiaries of the programs. In the two organizations I worked under the flag of NGO temporary volunteer and introduced myself as a student who was there to collaborate with the NGO and learn more about their work and the Cambodian culture. I believe that such approach was much softer than if I have presented myself as a formal researcher, as Cambodians tend to associate research with

evaluation. I collected data simultaneously for my volunteer assignments and my own research.

Rapport was built with the locals shortly after the formalities of professional duty were met. As I started inquiring about their persons, the local staff started opening to me. I would share my own as well and encourage a relationship characterized by civility, attentive listening and genuine concern for the informants in order to build trust. Felman, Bell & Berger (2003) describe as “commitment acts” the level of sacrifice and discomfort of what it is asked of the researcher, often present also in my experience. However, it was in the more mundane acts that I found the closeness gap with the locals would be reduced, such as wearing Khmer a skirt as they do, learning the first few words of their favorite radio songs, and drinking boiled tea as they did instead of bottled water. My identity as a woman originally from an also developing country working with an INGO was a door opener with many people, as I understood and was empathetic with them, and at the same time able to draw on examples of my own experience in topics some of which include corrupt governments, human rights abuses, fraud elections, neglected minorities, enormous socio-economical gaps, insecurity, and migration.

The data was extensive and collected through observations, interviews, casual conversations records and documents collection and analysis (Creswell, 2007). According to Wiersma (1991) and his classification of researcher roles, I was a privileged observer, as I did not assume the role of a participant, but will had access to the relevant activity for the study. Rossman & Rallis (2003) describe such position as of co-participation, where the level of participation entails an active collaboration in the daily activities instead of just being a passive spectator. The following section presents a brief description of the

experience working in each organization, the participants I interacted with and my role as a researcher in each setting.

Artefacts and Document Collection

From my initial contact with the two NGOs, I read reports, publications, and any form of literature that I was able to find both from the organization or others in the educational field. I obtained copies of curricula, program plans, official or unofficial documents that described how the NGOs work or the education they provide. Newspapers, magazines, English publications were also reviewed and analyzed in the context of the research topic. David Ayres, an Australian researcher in Cambodian education and currently advisor to a development committee in the Cambodian government, and I met while in Cambodia. He provided me with his insight as a subject matter expert and directed me to sources of more printed information such as the Hun Sen Public Library, CCC (Cooperation Committee for Cambodia) archives, and CDRI (Cambodia Development Resource Institute).

Observations

In my observations I attempted to generate the data from the perspective of the individuals being studied, including contextualization as the understanding of the context where those individuals think, react, and experience their thoughts, feelings, and actions (McMillan, 2000; Wiersma, 1991). I classified these individuals in three main groups: NGO staff, program participants, and community members, the latter which includes government representatives. During my work with the NGO, I had direct interaction with the participants, the NGO staff, and the community members. However, there were times when

I was not able to actively participate, consequently I acted as a passive observer, which implied being detached and watching activities which unfolded in front of me as if I was not present. Examples include the case of meetings involving NGOs working in education, or staff meetings for planning or professional development purposes.

In the words of Crang & Cook (2007), I was a participant observer, because for the majority of the time I was immersed into the everyday rhythms and routines of the school community, and developed relationships with the people involved in the research study as well. My role as a volunteer provided me with continuous and extended access to the participants on a daily basis throughout the length of the fieldwork. This situation allowed me to move from the position of being an “outsider” to one that was much more of an “insider”, a place highly regarded in qualitative study (Wolcott, 1999). This association provided me with many events, circumstances and interactions to extract information from. I took many notes about what I saw, did, smelled, touched, and sensed. During the break times, or at the end of the programs, people usually met to converse casually. I recorded the notes from these encounters in a journal and later partially transcribed, with entries being grouped by NGO and participant.

Interviews

Interview processes were different in both organizations, so I will explain the processes separately. The interview protocols for NGO staff, program participants and government representatives can be found in Appendix #4 and a sample of the consent forms in Appendix #3.

New Humanity.

a) Personal interviews

The personal interviews were conducted in a structured and semi structured way to a targeted sample group of people involved with the NGO projects, key informants, and as casual conversations also with all the participants (Wiersma, 1991). The interview sample for New Humanity includes three main groups of people: NGO staff, program participants, and community members as detailed in Table #1

Table 1. Sample of Interviewees for New Humanity

Group interviewed	Sample included
NGO staff	Executive director Assistant director Administrative support Program Advisors Program Managers Project Officers Teachers
Program participants	Parents of New Humanity run kindergarten students Beneficiaries of New Humanity ADFS Program Beneficiaries of New Humanity Health Program
Community members	Official school principals Official school teachers Community leaders: village and commune leaders, wise men Village neighbours District government authorities Other NGO members

I attempted to keep the interviews as balanced as possible in terms of sex. However there are some sectors that have an imbalance, given that some programs are exclusively for women it is the women in the household the ones who attend, or that most of the public positions are filled by men. Children and participants below 21 years old were not interviewed.

Interviews were useful to gather information that could not be observed regarding the NGO processes that aided the development of a grassroots civil society sector. The interviews were recorded and semi-transcribed for analysis. When it was not possible to record, I took notes and expanded as soon as the interview was finished (McMillan, 2000).

Generally speaking, interviewing countryside villagers was a very difficult task due to the language barriers, the descriptive nature of the questions, and the reluctance I could sense in them answering what they really believed against what they thought I wanted to hear. In terms of language, the interviews that needed to be in Khmer, mainly at the New Humanity settings, would be conducted by one of the program managers who would later translate into English for me in the afternoons. These interviews were mostly focused (McMillan, 2000), as the NGO staff member would obtain the answers for my interview protocol, and as I could not understand the answers although I was always present, I was not able to suggest on elaborations or dig deeper in a particular idea. However there were other times where the NGO staff would obtain the answer for my question and quickly translate it on site so I could read the answer and follow the interview suggesting new questions or giving it direction in an attempt of making it more semi-structured. The consent forms used for each interviewee were translated into a very basic version of Khmer and illiterate people would print their thumb as in agreement.

In terms of contents, I noticed that most of the villagers, excepting for the ones in leadership positions, were able to answer to yes/no questions but unable or unwilling to describe processes. When I noticed that the person did not understand my question or did not know what kind of answer I was expecting, I would simplify the question as much as possible and ask it again. When it was reluctance or fear what I could sense from the interviewee, I would not pressure and terminate the query, hoping to relay in other sources of information or some other times asking the local staff for their interpretation.

Seidman (2006) identifies the key informants in the qualitative research practice as in-depth interviews of people selected for their first-hand knowledge about a topic of interest. They are usually loosely structured, resembling a conversation among acquaintances, allowing a free flow of ideas and information. In the case of this research the key informants were selected after some time working with the NGOs, allowing me to get a sense of the best persons to target for this role, based on the information that each of them could provide me. Working with New Humanity they were a total of 5 key informants, all of them NGO local and expatriate staff members. These interviews were very enriching in terms of the locals and foreign perspectives, how they contradict or complement each other, what occurring in the field as well as each of the side's efforts, challenges and expectations.

b) Group interviews

Group interviews were not part of my original plan but they happened to fulfill many of the gaps that the limitations deriving from the aforementioned interview methods, so they were welcome. They would happen usually during the kindergarten parents' meetings where the teacher or NGO staff would ask the parents a question which I provided, and record the answer or conversation lines on the blackboard. When a discussion would derive from the

question the project manager would usually summarize it at the end of the session for me to understand the main idea.

c) Informal Interviews

Informal or ethnographic interviews are described by Flick (2006) as those informal conversations in the local and temporal framework, “where the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants” (p. 166). Because many of the NGO staff knew that I was there to volunteer for the NGOs and to conduct my research at the same time, our casual conversations would touch on the academic goal of my presence there and then the conversation would become more focused. I had many of these exchanges sharing meals, waiting for the electricity to be resupplied, or during the rest time after lunch. They were spontaneous and very lively, sometimes one on one, some others among a group of people. I recorded all the notes which I later reviewed and commented on to start the process of analysis.

Don Bosco

a) Personal interviews

The personal interviews were conducted in a structured and semi structured way to a targeted group sample of people involved with the NGO projects and 5 key informants, all of them NGO staff members. Students below 21 years old were not interviewed. As with New Humanity, the interview sample for Don Bosco included the same three main groups of people: NGO staff, program participants, and community members.

Table 2. Sample of Interviewees for Don Bosco

Group interviewed	Sample included
NGO staff	Six Salesian Sisters Teachers
Program participants	Vocational Training Centre students 21 years or older Don Bosco alumni
Community members	MoEYS representative in Phnom Penh Villagers in the places where volunteer teachers taught English on Sundays Other NGO members

The interview process was the same as with New Humanity: structured and semi-structured, recorded, and partially-transcribed for analysis. As much as it was my intent to keep the interviews as balanced as possible in terms of sex, given the mandate of the Sisters of Don Bosco to empower women and children through education, most of the interviewees were female excepting for government officers and a few other people involved in the programs. Language was not as much of a limitation given the fact that most NGO staff and program participants at the Vocational Training Centre spoke English. When I would find myself speaking with somebody that could not, there was always a translator available to help.

b) Informal interviews

Most of the information I gathered about Don Bosco came from informal conversations with NGO staff and program participants. Because I was part of the community of sisters who ran the programs, every meal, moto ride, casual walk from one side of the premises to other, were excellent opportunities to talk and learn more about the programs and people involved. Given the fact that one of my assignments was of keeping company to the

vocational training centre students at lunch time, I would spend those times in lengthy conversations with them about their lives. Such moments were good for them to practice their English and for me to learn more about their lives and reality.

c) Student Writing

My position as an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher at Don Bosco allowed me to collect some writing samples from the young women I taught that I would assign them to check on their writing skills, and at the same time, as they were issue oriented assignments, most of them allowed me an insight in the students' opinions, perceptions, reactions and thoughts on the research topic or related ideas. Although none of them are included in the data presented due to the fact that I have no consent forms from the authors to do so, and many of them were underage, the writing samples did provide me with important insights into the perception of each individual student. They would also show me which individuals would it be interesting to talk with in regards with certain ideas to know more about their opinions or who could I follow up with in terms of more elaboration.

Researcher Role

New Humanity

I spent two months working with New Humanity as a volunteer consultant for their ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) program, mainly in the rural province of Kompong Chhnang where most of their programs run. I lived with the NGO advisors in the same building where the NGO field office is located and spent the days commuting from the centre to the village projects with the program managers. My position as a consultant at New Humanity allowed me a privileged position in terms of data collection and what

Feldman, Bell & Berder (2003) call richness of the setting, referring to the different facts and viewpoints to which I had access to during the assignments.

During the two months with the organization I lived with the program advisors, all of them expatriates who have lived in the country for several years, who enriched me with their experiences and perceptions about the local people, culture and lifestyle through the Western eyes. At the same time my direct contact was with the program managers who were locals. Taking advantage of the fact that they all spoke English, they were a great source of information about the local life, their perceptions and at the same time they acted as my translators and research assistants. They helped me to interview people, translate the interviews, and we had interesting conversations about their perceptions of the contents of such interviews. It was by invitation of the Executive Director of New Humanity that I obtained the opportunity to network with other NGOs working in the field, as well as with umbrella organizations such as NEP (NGO Education Partnership) and CCC (Cambodian Cooperation Committee), which also provided their own perspective of the NGO-reality and facilitated the resources for triangulating my results.

Don Bosco

I spent two months at Don Bosco Foundation in the capital city of Cambodia, Phnom Penh. I lived with the Community of Salesian Sisters of Don Bosco, who run the programs, all of them from different parts of the world: Two Philipinos, two Vietnamese, one from Colombia and one from India. I mention this detail because it had an effect on the relationships dynamic both at the school and at the community life. My formal assignment was to teach three hours in total of ESL level two to the second year classes of young women every day. My informal assignments included to keep the girls company during the

resting time after lunch and before the class started (which is a cultural characteristic, as lunch breaks are one hour and a half for eating and nap purposes), to support the community in any assignments that would spontaneously arise, both with the schools or the boarding home, and to go with the English volunteer teachers on Sundays to their classes in the poor/rural communities. My position as a volunteer was very enriching in terms of access to different points of view about my research interest such as the NGO staff, participants, former participants, community members. Following is a brief description of the data collection process working with Don Bosco.

Data Analysis Process

The analysis of the data for both NGOs was multi layered, starting almost from the beginning while collecting it, as observations, conversations and interview led to reflection, insight and direction to organize and focus future interactions and encounters. Analysis was conducted following the spiral model of data analysis presented by Creswell (2007), where the processes of data collection, data analysis and report writing are not distinct steps in the process, but they complement each other and are interwoven in the report. As the idea of the analysis is to discover patterns, ideas, explanations and understandings, the data collected was analyzed by organizing and synthesizing it, to derive the patterns and ideas that will form the base for conclusions (Le Compte & Schensul, 1999) always in a sequence of analytical circles entering the process with raw data and exiting with an account, having gone through in the process through the analysis process in a constant come and go between the field and the researcher's working desk.

The first loop of such spiral includes data management. I kept a field journal in which I recorded my days, impressions of the people and activities, new learning

experiences, thoughts, ideas, rants, questions, insights, and even a few good practical tips. The journal was one of the most important tools not only in documenting the fieldwork experience, but also in perceiving how I changed as a researcher and as a person throughout the experience. I was able to observe the transition between the moment when I stopped sensing the field through the external eyes and started sensing it with the perspective of an internal character. I also kept another notebook where interviews would be recorded and translated, and as data started to accumulate, file folders were necessary to separate different topics or source. The lack of information technology in Cambodia, and especially in the middle of the countryside ricefields, allowed me to take a break from the laptop and go back to use color pens for detailing my notes, to physically place papers in the respective folders and to match photocopies I would collect with journal entries and interview translations.

A second phase while continuously collecting data was to become familiar with the collected data. For this I would immerse myself into the details of the data and become very familiar with it. In this process I reflected on the details, took notes, linked my findings with the literature that I have read beforehand, find leads for more data collection and tried to “hear what the interviewees said” (Creswell, 2007 p. 151). Almost every day of the four months in the field followed such routine.

A third loop of the Creswell spiral process of data analysis is about describing, classifying and interpreting the information that I had collected and continue to gather. First, the information was classified depending of the collection methodology used: observations, interviews, document analysis, and student writings. Then I decided to re-organize it by actors from the three different groups: NGO staff, program participants and community members. While re-reading, reflecting the available data and collecting more, what Flick

(2005) termed “units of meaning” (p. 297) started to emerge. These were ideas that would relate in one way or another to each other and were my base for coding (Stake, 1995).

Given the fact that both ethnographies and case studies relay heavily in descriptions, I decided to transcribe significant pieces of information into vignettes to coloured index cards, representing each color one participant including white for my own thoughts and ideas. It was then when the classification was much easier and the ideas elaborately reflected on as description starters. In the narrative I identified each respondent quoted with a letter that defines the group of interviewed people they belonged to and a two numbers, one that represents which their associated NGO, and the second is each participant’s personal identification. A list of the narrative identification codes can be found in Appendix #6.

As the coding process was taking place, the collection of data, its management and reflection continued taking place, but by now it was much more focused. Through the index coloured cards, common topics of repetitive or similar information were clear and those were my first round of themes. Eventually some blended, others had to be discarded, and after three reorganizations I came out with three for New Humanity and two for Don Bosco. The New Humanity themes were: 1) Community involvement, 2) Capacity building, 3) Intersectorial approach. For Don Bosco they were: 1) Holistic Education, 2) Values education. These themes happen to act as what Creswell (2007) names “families” of themes (p. 153) with children or subthemes. Each theme describes NGO interventions through their educational programs in which they contribute to the development of the civil society sector at the grassroots level, which is the main research topic.

Validation

The traditional criteria for validity find their roots in a positivist tradition, evolving into our days to the point of referring into the qualitative tradition as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative research practice (Golafshani, 2003). Creswell & Miller (2000) mention four strategies to consider in terms of validating the information obtained in qualitative research, of prime importance and four criteria numbered in Table 4 with descriptions on the way the present study meets them all to confirm its validity.

Table 3. Validation strategies

Validating Strategies	Research Validation
Prolonged engagement in the field	Five months in the field
Persistent observation throughout the field engagement	Everyday of documented observations directly or indirectly involved in the activities of the cases studied
Multiple sources and methods of data collection	Observations, interviews, document collection and analysis, casual conversations, students writing samples, group discussions
Opportunities for peer review and members check	With participant NGO staff, other NGO staff and fellow researchers.

The NGO staff who assisted me with translation and access issues also shared their thoughts and knowledge about the topic with me as a form of first hand or internal triangulation. Triangulation is a collection of multiple and different sources, methods, informants, and theories to provide corroboration to the evidence or look for inconsistencies or information that does not converge (Wiersma, 1991). Some more internal triangulation happened by showing the NGO staff my notes and commenting on them, or bringing points

to the participants that other participants have mentioned before looking for their reaction, which in most cases was of agreement. Some of the NGO staff had experience in qualitative research which was very useful in terms of them playing the role of “devils advocate” (Creswell, 2006, p. 208). At the end, the whole study draft was handed to both NGOs for their review and comments. If any changes had to be done at their request, I would consider them, review my primary sources and in all the cases the changes were done.

External validation came in the form of consulting with other NGOs working in Cambodia about the practices that have been successful for them, their circumstances and how much that information related to what I observed in my two case studies. The summary of such comparisons is illustrated in Appendix #7. Other forms of external validation included informal meetings and review of publications from subject matter local experts, included in the bibliography.

Subjectivity

My knowledge of the country and its situation before starting this research project was inexistent. This state of mind allowed me to be objective in all the things I saw, heard and learned culture-wise speaking. My optimistic nature is evident while reading the results, given my belief that it is the only way to be self-motivated in this world and even more in such a poor and underdeveloped country. However, I tried to be aware of this at the moment of writing as well, to avoid over shading the limitations and/or challenges that the organizations and people on the field face in their everyday lives. To finish this section, it is important to also highlight my high regard and faith in the human nature. My efforts through this study’s process are focused in making worthy not only the products of my volunteer

work there but also in contributing to the NGOs hard work to improve the quality of life of Cambodians.

During this experience, from setting the topic, developing the proposal, doing the fieldwork and writing the present document I have laughed, cried, become filled with hope, with frustration, desperation, optimism, negativism, I have missed people, colors, flavours and odours, I have felt and thought so many things and with all this personal transformation is that I write the present document, hoping to give voice to each of the persons I interacted with during the process both near and far.

Limitations

Many of the limitations that I encountered during the experience were described in the previous section, however here is the summary of them. First of all the language I would say was the most difficult challenge, because I was dependant of the local NGO staff to translate only-Khmer speakers. From this situation arose the fact that the translations would not always be accurate or if the NGO staff member did not understand the question well the whole sense of the encounter would be lost. The language barrier also prevented me from participating in informal gatherings with local people and build personal rapport with them.

Cultural shock, opposite to what many researchers identify as the first limitation in international research, was not an issue for me. Maybe it has to do with the fact that I already survived one immigration process and have learned to accept, adapt, and even blend into different cultures as my previous experiences working in other countries have demanded.

The political environment also played against me in terms of the general fear of village people to express themselves due to the political repression that they experience.

Some changes in NGO staff in both cases studies created a gap of knowledge between the newly arrived and the recently departed, leaving me and my questions many times with a common answer: “I am new in this position and therefore cannot help you in that matter”.

Although some institutional memory was kept in both organizations, I was not always successful to fill all my information gaps, so I would have to find the way of coming out with other topics, ideas or points of interest that would be more accessible, or just leave the incomplete ones like that, incomplete, and hope that they would be useful for something in the future. Time constraints were another factor that I was able to identify as a limitation, as I would have liked to spend more time in the field to learn more about each new thing I discover and deepen in the relationships I created.

CHAPTER 3

Cambodian Context of Culture and Contradictions

Located in the heart of the Indo-China Peninsula, Cambodia is a country of great history, rich culture and friendly people shaped by 30 years of recent conflict and political instability. Once the all mighty Kingdom of Angkor, the local people still feel nostalgia for those years of greatness. Throughout the years the kingdom lost territory to modern Thailand and Vietnam, their eternal enemies. This resentment is culturally learned and still present in modern generations. The Cambodians survived a difficult second half of the 20th century and are currently slowly reconstructing their country and joining the globalized world order, with the help of the international community. This chapter describes three of the most influential areas of life that shape culture: religion, social order, and education. A brief description of their chronological evolution is presented portraying the way they have shaped the country today and providing a clearer understanding on the socio-cultural context in which NGOs working in Cambodia live today.

*Traditional Cambodia**Religion and Spirituality: Buddhism and the Teak Na*

Since the 9th century the Khmers, as the Cambodian majority ethnic group like to be called, adopted Theravada Buddhism as the official religion, making it the core of their social, political and spiritual lives. Buddhism and monks symbolize country unity and an identity hallmark for Cambodians. All villagers have allegiance to a pagoda which is the place for worship, education, meetings and rituals. There is a Pagoda Committee, formed by lay people who make decisions regarding communal work, festivals, and other management

issues based on the local pagoda (Buddhist temple). It is interesting to note that the pagoda constitutes in fact the only place where villagers are truly collective (Lemarquis, 1992). The monks beg for food daily which therefore permits them to have regular contact with populations beyond the Wat (Buddhist temple).

The notion of “Kharma” implies that individuals are responsible for their own destiny and the present fate of the individual is the result of past actions. Buddhism is based on the belief that the individual comes first. This does not mean that people do not enjoy mutual company, as noted by O’Leary & Nee (2001), Khmers rarely spend time alone, rather they often spend an afternoon playing cards, or sharing celebrations such as weddings and festivities collectively. Buddhism in this locale functions as a social glue to keep traditional Cambodia together, and provided a moral check to prevent the political leaders from abusing their power (Tan, 2008). The dominant influence of Buddhism in the past also had a salutary effect on governance. The ruler and the Buddhist establishment shared a symbiotic relationship: while the Buddhist monkhood pledged its royal support to the ruler and provided legitimacy for him, the ruler maintained their support by observing the Buddhist teachings (Morris, 2000)

In the same line of spiritualism but not directly related to Buddhism, is the Neak Ta. Neak Ta are the spirits of ancestors that protect the community and are consulted along the life path. Through everything Khmers have experienced, their ancestors’ spirits have always been with their descendents. If Buddhism constitutes the centre of the village community, Neak Ta defines the village territory and its social networks.

The belief in the Neak Ta has never been exploited by politicians for proselytizing their goals. On the contrary, it is symbolic of independence in local affairs and brings certain cohesion to the families, who works collaboratively ensuring the Neak Ta are happy

and pleased. Neak Ta have also played an important role in clearly defining the hierarchy between elder and the young, as the people are submissive to their ancestors (Ang, 1990).

Social Order: The Traditional Role of Hierarchy

The social order of the traditional Cambodian society is reinforced by the Cambodian understanding of Buddhism. It depends on all the members of a community respecting the social hierarchy and keeping her or his place in it. From childhood, people are taught to obey and respect those with authority. Harmony within the group is primordial importance, and must be preserved at all costs (Overseen et al., 1996). This implies that personal opinions must not be expressed. There is a distinct discouragement of trying new things and a respect for the way things have always been done (Watts, 1999). Challenging, questioning and holding dissenting views are discouraged, conflict is seen as bad and loss of face should be avoided at all costs. Cambodian society is a social quest for order and traditionalism. This characteristic is illustrated in many Cambodian proverbs that stress the importance of retaining the status quo and observance of social codes of conduct.

Since the 6th century, the Indian traders established a complex social hierarchical structure based on strong patron-client relationship, where “those on the top governed, and the ones at the bottom existed to be governed” (Ayres, 2000, p.11). These patronage networks have functioned as a structure where the powerless could attach themselves to local notables and others with more power (Tully, 2005). Slavery was a usual practice depending directly on their masters and all free men had to be registered as clients of a particular patron who could be an official, royal family or members of local elite. The essence of leadership in traditional Cambodia was exploitation rather than service, patronage rather than cooperation. Chandler (1996) mentions that in many Southeast Asian

languages the verb “to govern” was the same as the word “to eat” (p.302), as though those in power would prey upon those over whom they had control.

The roles of men and women in traditional Cambodian society have been traditionally also pre-defined. Following the Buddhist belief that a meritorious life will grant the person a better one after reincarnation, the women’s first step to improve their condition was to be reincarnated as a man (Chandler, 1996). In the meantime, the chbab-srei has been the traditional Cambodian code of conduct for women, and they are severely judged by society according to it. Some of its principles include:

Be demure: gentle, polite, speak and walk appropriately

Be respectful: as a good daughter respects her parents, as a good wife respects her husband

Be caring

Be a good mother: provide shade for the children to grow, take care of the children and show them the right way, take care of the house, prepare delicious food, receive husband’s guests and family in the right way\$ and be friendly gith neighbours.

Be moral

Be discreet, do not gossip, and do not bring problems of outside to insade and vice versa

Although there is also a chbab proh (code for men) society does not pay much attention to it (O’Leary & Nee, 2001; S2-1). Two proverbs that represents this situations are:

“Manooh proh doch meas duk dop, sittrei doch krorfat saw”

(Mel are like pure gold, women are like white cloth)

and

“Samnap young day srei young proh”

(The seedling supports the soil and the women supports the men)

Education as Cultural Transmission

Dy (2004) notes that the traditional social and cultural perspective of education in Cambodia views education as an honest route to better the human condition, intentionally aimed at shaping individuals for a better lifestyle, knowledge, and good manners for living their respective societies. The Buddhist monks started Wat schools since the seventh century where male students learned to read and write the Khmer language, memorise the principles of Buddhism, learn some arithmetic, and engage in collaborative work with the monks to build temples, buildings and other infrastructure.

The students' spiritual and moral development was monitored by the monks who served as their spiritual mentors. Schooling was financed mainly by villagers in the community, enhancing the close ties between these Wat schools and the community. These schools served to support social solidarity by ensuring social cohesion and the maintenance of traditional values. The parents truly believed that when their children finish their education at the Wat schools, they would be good citizens and be respected by the community because of their education in the spiritual life, religious counselling and how to live harmoniously in society (Dy, 2004; Tan, 2008). It was however, a very passive system of teaching and learning, where the teacher taught the students and paid very little attention to understanding and analysis. Students were given very little if not any opportunity to think independently, to question or to use their own initiative (Tan, 2007).

War, Genocide and Occupied Cambodia (1970-1989)

King Sihanouk was overthrown by an American backed government with interests in neighbouring Vietnam in 1970. That was the beginning of a five year civil war, led by the Khmer Rouge communist guerrilla. As the Khmer Rouge was slowly taking the countryside and surrounding the capital city, the rural communities were transformed in labour camps ruled by an extremist self-sufficient communist ideology. During the early days of the Khmer Rouge's Regime, over 2 million people in a country of eight million fled to the capital looking for refuge (Chandler, 2008).

Phnom Penh fell in April 1975. The Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Pot Pol intended to create a new society through creating a 'new person' out of each citizen by destroying the three main foundations of the old one. First, there was the Western modern culture, residual of French colonization, which was closely associated with the elite, and included all educated people and former government functionaries. The doctors, judges, bankers, engineers, teachers were killed. Only a few who understood what was happening before it was too late survived by hiding their identities, just to face the miserable future that was to come under Pot Pol's leadership (Gottesman, 2004).

The second source of Cambodian culture was Buddhism. The country's thousands of monks –also known as the sangha-, who enjoyed of a high regarded societal status, authority, and were responsible for much of the country's educational system, were forced to give up their robes and work as any other peasant or die. Although the practice of any tradition related with Buddhism or the spirits was strictly forbidden during the Khmer Rouge, many of the survivors continued to secretly practice them, as the book by Criddle (1998) "To Destroy You Is No Loss" recounts.. Based on the true experience of a surviving

family as many other books published in the subject, there is a chapter on the last year of Khmer Rouge rule where the main character marries and describes how the mother, in preparation for the next day's ceremony, improvises a small ceremony to request the spirits intercession for good luck to the new couple hidden from the Khmer Rouge cadres.

The third source was folk culture, traditionally passed by the elderly, which was characterized both by interaction with the spirits and the individual history and family lines. This was broken by separating families into working brigades away from each other and forcing the marriage between strangers with the only objective of procreation, just to be separated soon after. Children were taught to spy on their own parents and denounce any kind of anti-revolutionary behaviour or comment (Criddle, 1998; Pin, 1987).

The Khmer Rouge enforced a systematic programme of execution, starvation and forced labour to compel such cultural change, where torture and executions were strategies to evoke terror and coerce the general population into complying with their rule (Haynes, 2009; O'Leary & Nee, 2001). They also attempted to deliberately destroy any social institution or form of identity. *Angka*, is the Khmer word for organization, and the one that the Khmer Rouge used to name its regime (Barton, 2001). As a result, currently, any initiative that has to do with groups, cooperation, solidarity or collective action, must contend with the negative associations that these words acquired for the Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge (The World Bank, 2005).

The life during those days was incredibly miserable in Cambodia. The years of war and genocide left the individuals who survived with the only goal of surviving until the next day not matter at what or whose expense. This attitude still prevails today, and is evident in the everyday life, from the village families to the government elites. The moral guidelines of behaviour bend very easily to the sound of money or self benefit. As a consequence,

enormous socio-economic differences are evident today, social problems such as human trafficking and prostitution find impunity behind the veil of the official institutions, and the corruption is endemic (S1-2, S2-1). Even Khmer hierarchy kept society living happily before the war because it was based on goodness and the prosperity of the kingdom. However during the Khmer Rouge regime, the entire social order changed. When the Vietnamese troops arrived and occupied the country the situation did not improve much. The few educated survivors and imported professionals were assigned government positions and were asked to educate their fellow coworkers in their area of expertise, being many of these fellow co-workers defected Khmer Rouge cadres that had recently tortured and exploited their co-workers. Gottesman (2005) describes how the life at that moment, for those people in power and high positions, was defined by small favours such as an allocation of rice, a house, or physical security, a situation that continues until today.

As a result, the civil war in Cambodia left the people weak and unorganized. The years under the Khmer Rouge regime did enormous damage to the older socio-cultural order. The effects of such damage are still felt today and many of them were inherited by the new generation. The communist years under the Vietnamese occupation aimed to modestly reconstruct the official structures in a post-conflict and very poor country. However, this process has been slow, it is still ongoing, and it taught the people to look after themselves and their own personal interests no matter at whose expense. Modern Cambodian culture encompasses all these historical facts that shape the relationships, goals, and progress of a country determined to find its place in the current world order.

*Cambodia Opens to Modernity**Religion and Spirituality: Reconciling the Effects of the Past*

The Cambodians have a deep sense of moral behaviour based in the Buddhist tradition. They honour their ancestors' spirits, greet Buddha by bowing in the temples, among other practices. As much as the Khmer Rouge tried to uproot the traditional Buddhist values which include respect for the elders, peace and life, there is a deep part of the Cambodians who believe those values are the correct way to go. Still the current political, economical, and social situation in the country demands to shift priorities from what the people believe is correct to do than what is more convenient for their personal benefit (S1-2).

For many survivors of the 70s and 80s, Buddhism has been a way of finding peace under the belief that life is suffering and through the encouragement of the acceptance of injustice and sufferings in this world as the consequence of one's deeds in his or her past life, and to accumulate more merit to enjoy happiness in the next life. (Morris, 2000). In literature and legends, there are plenty of stories that illustrates the belief that social position is not permanently fixed and can be changed through good deeds or luck. "People are who they are, not just because of who they are but also of who they have been" (O'Leary & Nee, 2001, p. 58). Some authors even argue that the Buddhist philosophy has unwittingly led to an emphasis on conformity at the expense of individual thinking and an a more proactive approach to improvement (Morris, 2000; Pellini, 2005; Tan, 2008).

Although religion was revived with the help of a few monks who survived the Khmer Rouge, others who arrived from Vietnam during its occupation, and the people's eagerness to practice again, the war also had a negative effect in the Buddhist tradition. As

an example there is the fact that many young men seek to become monks often more for secular and material motivations rather than spiritual, because being a monk ensures that you will be fed each day and receive an education (Haynes, 2009; S1-2). Another example is the high number of newspaper articles published describing any kind of scandal related with monks, i.e. rape, drugs, misuse of wats. Downie & Kingsbury (2001) suggest that this situation might be due to the inability of monks and spiritual leaders to address the material, spiritual, moral and ethical problems in society, because most of them were victims of the war and the Khmer Rouge years too and might be in the process of self-healing before being able to address the community as a whole.

The Neak Ta still plays an important role in the everyday life of the Cambodians in matters that range from guarding the families' good luck and health, to deciding the dates for important events such as marriages or business transactions. One journal entry reads as follows:

Today we went to visit a kindergarten class running under a house in the province of Monduliri. One of the NGO staff members explained to me the way in which the venue owner had been threatening them to not allow the NGO to use his house for running the kindergarten class while the classroom was built inside the school compound due to some unhappy spirits around. The NGO staff kept telling me about his negotiations. First he offered to buy a hen to sacrifice. The sacrifice took place but apparently the spirits were not happy yet so the man kept bothering about the need of a 4-legged offering, which would usually be a pig. Instead the NGO staff offered two chickens (which sum together four legs) and the issue was settled. For now. In my narrow mind I first thought that the sacrifices were a excuse to get fresh products from the NGO, but after they sacrifice them they don't eat them,

they entirely burn them, so it is not like the family is winning anything other than peace of mind.

Another quote reads as follows:

After nap-time I asked why the girl we were talking with, who looked so bright and interesting, had left the NGO program. The answer was that the spirits had dictated that it was time for her to get married. So she did, had a baby within 9 months and that was it for her education. "Nothing to do about it" said to me the NGO local staff member I was with. Once the spirits say something, there is no mortal that would dare to even question.

Social Order: Mistrust, Power, Change of Roles, and Evolving Lifestyle

Social mistrust

After 30 years of war, and 20 of living with political instability, the ties that gather people socially in Cambodia are very weak. In view of the fact that many times during those rough years Cambodians had to live in survival mode, where it was the strongest who survived, it is a consequence today that the people do not trust each other outside their immediate family circles and they do not feel free to voice out their opinions due to the political repression. The government is always observant, and the villagers are constantly scared that their opinion would make somebody in a higher hierarchy angry. Given the fact that in the past this situation would lead to immediate execution, the Cambodians learned to keep their opinions to themselves, to be suspicious and reserved.

During the rule of the Khmer Rouge party and the following communist Vietnamese regime periods, all media was state-controlled and the people were discouraged, if not actively prevented, from participating in decision-making. Permanent suspicion is a

characteristic of relationships between civilian associations and government in an environment where it is the rule of the strongest is the last word, not the rule of law (S1-2). The politicians' interests in using the civil organizations for political purposes under the threat of accusation under the charge of being involved in unauthorized activities, undermines their credibility even more (Barton, 2001; Meas, 2000).

During the Khmer Rouge regime, people learned by experience that they could not trust friends, neighbours, siblings, or even their own children. This lack of trust has remained as a cultural characteristic, hampering the development of the civil society sector, and is evident in the lack of co-operation and co-ordination between associations and NGOs (Downie & Kingsbury, 2001). A local staff member was casually talking with me at the coffee time, openly vented his frustration towards the first Prime Minister, expressing impotency to the fact that the man had been in the position for 30 years, and he does not have any interest in improving the country for its inhabitants, and yet it is impossible to say anything about it without fear of being listened by the wrong person "and then, one day you would just disappear" (S1-9).

Use or abuse of power

Power is a concept that is difficult for Cambodians because of their experience of power in the last generation is abuse. A local staff member told me that empowerment is a word widely used by the NGO he works with, but they [him and the other local staff members] try to change the translation because people are uncomfortable with it. I remember him mentioning that now he understood it was about providing the people with opportunities for a better life, however when he would translate the word in Khmer he would use another one

because Cambodians would think that he is referring to transferring abuse power over to another person, which is not very welcomed by many (S1-5).

Cambodian society is strongly dominated by leaders who are either ex-military officials or who are closely linked to military patrons. Violence and the structures emerging from conflict create a strong system of oppression, which to some degree still remains after the conflict. Land seizures, widespread corruption and the abuse of power committed by powerful authorities are an expression of the government's inability to establish a proper functioning justice system. Both the Cambodian government and the Cambodian people struggle to trust each other which is a barrier in the development of a civil society sector at the grassroots level (O'Leary & Nee, 2001).

The World Bank identifies Cambodia today as a post-conflict country with depleted human capital, weakened social capital, and unresponsive institutions (The World Bank, 2006). An example of the impact of these characteristics in society is the fact that many poor people are afraid to go to the doctor due to the costs and prefer to visit the local healer who are uneducated in health (Barton 2001, S1-4). An international NGO staff member explains:

The problem goes deeper because the doctor will most probably know nothing either because he bought his degree or will cause more harm to the patient than any help he can provide. Good doctors are mostly private because the state-sponsored doctors' salary is miserable, which make them inaccessible for most of the population. The government in exchange of taking leadership in this issue, keeps spending the money in their personal interests (S2-1).

Health services are just an example, but most of the official ministries face the same situation.

The role of patron-clients relationships is still strong in modern Cambodia. The system of patron-client relationships rests on the notion of “the winner-takes-all” attitude where there is no tradition of real power being shared between the patron and the clients. Based on this top-down approach, the patron is accountable to no one but himself, and any questions from his clients is seen as an act of disloyalty. Instead, the ruled are expected to maintain the patronage relationships by accepting the patron’s authority. (Pellini, 2005, Tan, 2007).

Roberts (2003) describes this phenomenon in the government interactions as a result of remaining patterns of communist principles of organization that is combined with traditional hierarchies of absolute power of a king-god. Political leaders exist at the top of a pyramid structure of relationships, rewarding the base people who put them in power, while the population accepts it because it is the way things traditionally have always been (Ayres, 2000; Downie & Kingsbury, 2001; Fuller, 1991, Hughes & Ojendal, 2006; and Pellini, 2005). Political leaders can elicit bribes from both domestic and international sources and not be questioned (Roberts, 2003). Deriving from this situation, corruption has greatly impacted in the democratic consolidation of the country, undermining efforts to strengthen institutions, transparency and accountability (Tan, 2007; Un, 2006).

At the village level, where there is no valid justice system, people look for powerful protectors or other alternative systems that can guarantee their personal security and support the needs in their lives (S1-4). Some villagers commented that they perceive the patron-client system of relationships as essential. They for instance, choose their patron from among villagers whom they trust and who has strong links with the authorities. Cambodians who are part of the system seem to consider the patronage system as an indispensable social support to assist in whatever their needs are, which may include a life threatening matter,

health concern, favours related to children, security matters, and/or economical challenges.

As in every relationship, there is a positive side of the patronage system which is the assistance in times of need, but also a negative side which is exploitation.

Although the patron-client system of relationships is still a major influence in the Cambodian culture, new patterns of social relationships and organization have developed in the villages. The social organization and practices that traditionally tied villages and communities together have been weakened by the war, the Khmer Rouge regime, and the subsequent years of invasion. People are less likely to help one another, the value of the human being is very low, the loss of moral values is evident, and greed and selfishness have become the rule (Ebihara et al., 1994; Ngram, 2004; and Tully, 2005). Now, more monetized oriented relations had become the norm, where the ethos to 'get rich quick' has become deeply embedded in recent years, compared with the mutual assistance which had once characterized rural Cambodia (Downie & Kingsbury, 2001; Haynes, 2009).

O'Leary and Nee (2001) conducted a workshop on Khmer values and reported that the social behaviours according to the social position in the hierarchy ladder are learned by experience, not by internalization or even recognition. "In the community, the 'big' people are arrogant and the 'little' people afraid. Generally the poor respect the big people because we want the big people to pity us and support us, we do not want them against us" (pg.50). They illustrate their point by quoting some of the Khmer proverbs:

"Kom bos san touch rom long phnom"

(Don't throw the fishing line over the mountain)

"Kluon teab kom tong, dai klay khley kom chhoung sra va oop phnom"

(When you are a short person you should not try to pick up something high, or if your hand is short, then you should not try to grasp the mountain)

“Kone neak krur tweau kang torp, kone neak mean tweu policem kone rotmuntrey tow rien now borroteih”

(The children of the poor are soldiers, the children of the rich are police and the children of the ministers study abroad)

Reluctance to openly oppose, disagree with or even question those in power is another Cambodian socio-cultural characteristic, product of the combination of the hierarchical culture, patron-client system of relationships, the Cambodian belief that misfortune is a result of fate, and the traditional educational system (O’Leary & Nee, 2001). One NGO staff member commented that this passive attitude of Cambodians only makes the idea of developing a civil society sector at the grassroots level more difficult (S1-2). Lee (2004) explains that “to Asian citizens, it does not matter who rules and in what way the country is ruled, as far as they are in a situation where they can live their lives, maintain their relationships, and pursue their individuality (in terms of spiritual development). Then they will live with whoever the ruler is, unless the situation becomes intolerable” (p. 31 in Tan, 2008)

Cambodians tend to be passive and reactive because they have learned that every action will be watched, judged, and the person will pay dearly for failure, thus there is no room for mistakes. Huges & Ojendal (2006) also suggest that when the local culture is ignored, the people will react with not much interest or commitment for the cause, which is the case of many international organizations and NGOs who aim to teach democracy as a Western concept without much consideration for the local culture or background.

The experience of prolonged and excessive control by military and authoritarian structures frequently encourages people to not look beyond themselves, their own survival and immediate situation. The Cambodian administration and Cambodians generally, are

often criticized by outsiders for their lack of foresight and planning, a tendency not to look beyond tomorrow and act collectively (Barton, 2001). Long-term planning by Cambodians, has been hampered by the intermittent wars, the international isolation, limited planning experience, Vietnamese imposed administration of the country, and by the cessation of Soviet aid. From the era of Vietnamese occupation, especially after the Khmer Rouge years, a wrong decision could result in severe punishment or death, and consequently there has been a severe reluctance from the Khmer people to make decisions and the current substitution of proper ethics and ways of survival (Downie & Kingsbury, 2001). People don't know any other way (S1-2). One illustrative popular proverb reads: "kbal no na sock neak nung" meaning, 'to take care of the hair in your own head'.

One of the international NGO staff members that I spoke with also commented on this characteristic:

It is sometimes very frustrating with the local staff because next week is already too far for them. I guess it makes sense if you think that not so long ago there was not a tomorrow to plan for, but when you need to make an organization plan and think in the strategy to follow it is very difficult. However let me tell you, last years' Christmas gifts were schedule books for each staff member and I have seen them improve by using them (S1-3).

Another of the international NGO staff recognized the ability to be and work together as one that any strong civil society sector should have. She also recognized the lack of both in the Cambodia countryside by explaining that "people here are afraid of being and work together. How to associate to help each other, they don't know this. The government won't do it for them, so they [the local people] have to have some initiative" (S1-4).

Evolution of gender roles and lifestyle

Women are a sector of the Cambodian society that is quite visibly evolving. Gender inequality has historically been more pronounced in education, political authority, and the double burden that women face in managing domestic tasks and contributing to agricultural or income generating activities. Some aspects have improved minimally and examples include the gender gap in education and literacy (which is improving), and women's participation in politics, although still marginal, are not longer non-existent. However others have become worse. After the war there were very few marriageable-men and they found that behaviours and attitudes that would not have been tolerated in the past were not tolerated. As a consequence, there is a high rate of domestic violence and female-led households because men often abandon one woman and still can remarry (The World Bank, 2005; Velasco, 2005).

A shift in the new generation's views on how the life should be lived is also starting to develop in Cambodian society, especially in the bigger urban areas. The closest influence is from Thailand, visible in dressing trends, ideas, businesses among others. I read in the newspaper and heard adults complain about the current generation of teenage children who dresses in provocative Thai-fashion clothing, or wear Thai-inspired hair styles, an unusual practice in still conservative Cambodia. It is also evident that there is a change of habits in how to spend recreational time, especially among the younger generation, which likes to loiter in city streets until late at night and spend time in the only mall for the fun of being there instead of shopping needs. Even in the countryside there are houses with Thai magazines pictures hanging from the walls as decorations, and conversations full of excitement about the newest shop with Thai clothing in the closest urban centre. Despite the

encouragement of the international community for the country to open to the world and welcome new trends, the weight of tradition is still very heavy and the rule in most social behaviours. The clash between traditional values and the demands of modernity is one of the most outstanding contradictions found in the country that still needs much work to reach a healthy balance between the Khmer traditional identity and the globalized world demand for competency.

Education: Blending Traditional Approaches with Modernity Demands

Formal education today is a legacy of traditional Khmer instruction, French colonialism, and Vietnamese communism. Khmer instruction focused on social solidarity and citizenship. French colonialism was based in producing Cambodians with skills to fill basic administrative and clerical positions where it was not required for employees to think for themselves and consequently eliminated any possibility of threatening the colonial rule. After the war and Khmer Rouge regime, the Vietnamese manipulated the educational system to indoctrinate Cambodians into the communist ideology (Ayres, 2000). Also, O'Leary & Nee (2001) comment on the absence of any current mechanism to connect the family with school, so parents see no need in participating or having a role in the educational process. Also, I was able to observe that the government funded public schools are in very bad physical conditions, and many of the teachers, mostly in the rural areas, do not even show up to work. If they do show up, they do not teach, and if they teach, it is not related to the students' educational needs. It made me think that sadly, there is no wonder about the reasons parents have to prefer to have their children help them in the fields than attending school.

With a new focus of education in the development of human capital for the economic development of Cambodia, the World Bank introduced a new trend for Third-World nation states such as Cambodia, where human resources development, free trade, and minimum state intervention are the priorities for these countries to progress (Ayres, 2000). This step towards modernity leaves the personal development aside, always a hallmark in traditional Cambodian instruction. Tan (2007) conducted a study on the perception of the tension between professional versus personal development, where the results demonstrated an evident discontent in the lack of morality instruction in the school system, and how it reflects the current value shifts in society. Students described how delinquent students can pay the teachers for excellent marks and how teachers sell the answers of exams or deliberately avoid teaching all the contents during school hours so the students are forced to pay for private tutoring. There is no climate of accountability on the part of the school management and teaching staff (Kamm, 1998; Tan, 2008). If education is the tool to form the people who will be the future of the country, the current state of public schooling is perpetuating the disorganization and corruption that are prevalent outside of the school walls.

Bad management and lack of morality are not the only challenges that the education system faces in Cambodia. While the MoEYS (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports) has announced plans to offer scholarships especially to poverty stricken students, this is not enough to encourage parents to send their children to school. These parents usually need their children to help on the farm, or find a job to financially support the family. The parents are simply unable to bear the cost of losing the income that the children may generate for the family by working if their children were to attend school. A number of parents from villages also discourage their children to continue their studies after upper secondary school

as they think that their children will not be able to find a job given the high rates of unemployment facing graduates in Cambodia (Tan, 2007).

Cambodia leaders, except for Pot Pol during the Khmer Rouge regime, have all considered the education system as an essential institution for creating good citizens and promoting development. Beyond this perspective, these same leaders have used the educational system to justify their elite positions, leaving the institutions without skilled leaders, inadequate salaries for the teachers who are forced to work second jobs or be corrupt to meet ends, and having the families pay for most of the educational expenses that education represents. Ayres (2000) believes that the educational shortcomings have their roots in the failure of policy makers to consider the political and socio-cultural context. The tensions and contradictions evident in a country trying to reconcile tradition and modernity create deficiency in the education system both at the local and global level. An example of such contradictions is the apparent acknowledgement by the Cambodian government of Westernized perspectives and logic processes on education as the key for development into global modernity. However at the same time, these perspectives are continuously disregarded by local socio-political and socio-cultural forces and by the political elite which, without any concern for the aspirations of the Cambodian people, are only trying to legitimize their authority through educational provision (Ayres, 2000).

NGOs Working in Cambodia: Political and Cultural Dynamics

Since the NGOs arrived in Cambodia with the UN in 1991, they have run a parallel state in almost all areas of life. One of the international NGO staff members that I spoke with affirms that if it was not for the NGOs the lives of Cambodians would not be much better off than in the late 1980s where Vietnam withdrew. Other NGO staff members

suggested that the presence of NGOs allows the state to become lazy because they provide services that the government should provide by default. However NGOs continue to provide them in order to build local capacity, a goal that the government is not interested in investing. Overall, working in Cambodia is not an easy task. At the national level, there is high government suspicion of NGOs encouraging political opposition through their activities (Barton, 2001). Downie & Kingsbury (2001) and Un (2006) coincide in recognizing three fundamental reasons influencing the government's fear and suspicion towards the NGOs. First, many leaders of human rights and democracy oriented NGOs are expatriate Khmers or former political prisoners who are strongly anti-authoritarian. Even if these leaders have no personal interest in power, it is still difficult for the government to understand the concept of political neutrality and is still resilient to abandon their idea of "if it is not with me, it is against me". Second, some of the issues that NGOs advocate, namely the rule of law, anticorruption, accountability, judicial reform, and protection of human rights, are also part of the opposition agenda. Third, NGOs receive funding from foreign countries and international organizations that are interested in promoting democracy and human rights in Cambodia. Given the country's short-term experience with democracy and human rights, NGOs have been unable to fill this task.

At the local level, it is worthy to mention that in the Khmer language the word for organization is "angkah" which is the same word that the Khmer Rouge used to describe their regime. It is difficult to build and develop organizations because the local villagers still have very horrific memories of the Khmer Rouge and with anything that had to do with organizations. The generation that survived the Khmer Rouge has difficulty in believing that there could be sincerity in an NGO claiming to exist for the benefit of the people (Barton, 2001).

There is also the issue of imposing or respecting foreign rather than local values. In Cambodian society certain values such as conformity, respect, obedience, harmony, and social stability, as previously described, are important for the local society, however, they are usually underestimated by foreigners. Western values of empowerment, participation, gender equality, and social justice are promoted in most of the foreign organizations; however, usually they are not relevant for the local population. This disregard of values creates tension between the balance of imposing versus respecting local and foreign values which has an impact beyond organizational philosophy. Local development practitioners working in international organizations often struggle to accommodate to what is culturally and socially acceptable and expected, and the demands of their work, which often requires certain behaviours. Much of this tension is not at a conscious level (O'Leary & Nee, 2001).

Despite the difficulties and limitations, NGOs working directly or indirectly with the development of the grassroots civil society sector have remained optimistic and grown in numbers. Relationships between the state and civil society in post-conflict Cambodia are complicated by the formal institutions that might provide the basis for defining and pursuing an inclusive national identity and development vision are still somewhat underdeveloped in both political and social spheres (The World Bank, 2005). For the Cambodians, the notion of a civil society sector is difficult because it is not an Asian term nor tradition. Civil society is best understood by the local people as a group of people's ability to work together for a common goal. I worked with a few locals who understood the collaborative approach that the civil society concept includes, as well as its role representing the people's interests and values as a group or community. However only one person made the connection that it should include government and other organizations for the benefit of a community at a

large. In part, this is likely to be due to the fact that the government has always been very distant from its people that they see no use or interest or motivation in making it a reality.

Conclusion

Cambodia is a country of contrasts and contradictions, rooted in the traditional practices of a longstanding tradition, contested by a set of foreign modern practices, evident in all the aspects of life. The first contradiction is found in the history of the country: it was the almighty powerful kingdom of Angkor which ruled a big part of South East Asia back in the 6th – 14th centuries. They were prosperous and proud. However in the last century they experienced a series of rough periods including being a foreign protectorate, independent years, civil war, genocidal regime, communist occupation, and democracy now. All these stages have been characterized by armed conflict, violence, political repression, degradation of the human life, poverty, and misery. However they never lack hope.

Hope for Cambodians is rooted in the Buddhist tradition of the country where a second contradiction is found. Cambodia is a deeply Buddhist country, and the Buddhist tradition has ruled the moral guidelines of behaviour for centuries. Spirituality is very important for Cambodians and they take it seriously. However the last century's events have affected not only the people's physical bodies and social relationships, but also their spirits. Buddhism has survived as the kingdom's religion until now by providing the people with hope of a better future, or a better next life, regardless of how bad the situation is in the present. However, also as a result of the previous century's events, a shift in moral priorities has taken place. The human instinct for survival during the harsh decades of the 70s and 80s altered the people's moral principles into endurance-mode practices. The fine line between what is correct and incorrect was substituted with the instinct of survival, regardless of the

cost. Today it is a common sight to find people trying to be a good Buddhist by following the spiritual tradition. At the same time, the same people find themselves looking for the opportunity of exploit others, or are self-interested in power and money which appear to be the new priorities in the values scale for Cambodians.

The social order also presents a number of contradictions in terms of social relationships, behaviour guidelines, and organizational patterns. The traditional social order in Cambodia was founded in the harmony by respecting a pronounced social hierarchy, encouraged by a system of patron-client relationships and fixed gender roles. The Khmer Rouge tried to uproot this social order by imposing opposite practices during their regime. After, democracy arrived with a new set of social rules to implement in the already fragile country. As a result, the traditional way of living has changed, most evidently in some aspects from life than others, such as gender relationships, trend patterns, and social values. This situation causes a tension between the traditional codes of conduct and the demands of modernity that the globalize world imposes, a world that the Cambodian government has agreed to be part of without popular consent, pressured by the international community.

Since education is one of the tools through which people enculturate and acculturate to the changes of time, it is realistic to assume that a lot of attention would have been placed to make the educational system strong during the country's reconstruction. However there are also a series of contradictions, being two of the most evident are the goal of education and the use of education. The goal of education traditionally in Cambodia has been the country's development and production of good citizens, a view currently shared by the international community. However for the government elite, education provision is a mean to legitimize their power, leaving aside any consideration for the effects it might have on its people. According to the Cambodian Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, the use of

education should be as a tool of enculturation in regards to the new governance trend, which is democracy, and the preparation of citizens to be capable of responding to the economic and social needs of the globalized modern world. However in reality, the current educational system only reflects the corruption and disorganization of the government apparatus that organizes and funds it, wasting its potential and transformation capacity.

NGOs working in the country find their own set of contradictions, most often in cultural differences. They face the challenge of working with a government that has allowed them to operate and bring resources to the country, but that at the same time demonstrates enormous suspicion and mistrust about the NGO activities, always fearing the threat of challenge for power. They also face the challenge of finding a healthy compromise between Western and Eastern values in their professional practice where the locals are not to be alienated, and at the same time the organization's will reflect their mission and vision. The NGOs in Cambodia find themselves working among these contradictions with a population where the mistrust is widespread, where the social ties are weak, the use of power is usually associated with abuse, and the traditional observances of conduct, such as the patron-client relationships system, no longer keep the social order but now promote social disruption which includes corruption and exploitation.

This chapter has provided an overview on the context and culture in Cambodia. Given the fact that civil society development is a cultural undertaking, and education is a deeply culturally entrenched enterprise too, this chapter provides the fundamentals of the study of two particular NGOs as separate case studies. These NGOs have been working in Cambodia since the early 1990s and have experienced personally first-hand all the characteristics described above. The following chapters will explain each of their work in

more detail, and describe how the educational programs that they provide contribute to the development of the civil society sector at the grassroots level in Cambodia.

CHAPTER 4

Case 1: New Humanity

New Humanity is one of the two INGOs studied in this research project. This chapter will explore the processes the organization performs through its educational programs that have an impact in the development of the local civil society sector, their contributions, as well as their limitations. Although the strengthening of democratic practices or ideas is not the focus or goal of New Humanity, many of their interventions do have an impact in the acculturation process that bridges traditional practices and beliefs with the need to evolve towards the modern globalized practices.

This chapter starts by summarizing the programs and main areas where the NGO works as of late 2008. It continues with four subsections, each of them representing the four main areas where the NGO has influence in regards to the development of the civil society sector at the local level. Specific interventions are described under each section, providing evidence from the field and organized as follows: first the international NGO staff accounts, followed by local staff contributions, followed by program participants' insights, followed by community members' opinions, and finalizing with my personal observations. As not all of the groups mentioned above had input in regards to each of the themes and subthemes, some accounts are longer than others. However the order of the information available per topic follows the previously described order and the source will be always identified in the text. A list of the sources codes can be found in Appendix #6. I finish the chapter with a summary about the main NGO interventions in the area of education that have an impact with the development of the local civil society sector and their links with literature on the topic.

Description

New Humanity is a non-profit, non-political, humanitarian NGO, promoted by the P.I.M.E. Institute (Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere), legally registered in Italy, and approved by the Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs-International Cooperation in 1992. Their mission is to develop and improve education services, especially for children, youth, women, and people with disabilities, by working in partnership with local communities. This is with the aim of contributing to build a society where everyone, irrespective of age, gender, religion or ethnic group, has the same chance to receive an appropriate education, corresponding to their needs, aptitude and ability (Annual Report, 2007). The NGO projects have a human development focus in the areas of educational, cultural, social, and economic programs. These programs are planned in response to the requests or immediate needs of communities, and in agreement and collaboration from them and the local authorities.

New Humanity works in the provinces of Kompong Chhnang, Mondulhiri and Kandal, although the main administrative office is located in the capital city of Phnom Penh. The NGO runs three programs. One is Education and Health, which include Basic and Non-Formal Education (BNFE), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), The Masters of Arts in Sociology and Anthropology, and Health Education, Prevention and Emergency Relief (HEPER). A second program focused in education for people with disabilities, includes Education and Development Project for the Disabled (EDPD) and Disabled Day Care (DiDaCa). The third program is in agricultural education which includes Agriculture Development and Food Security (ADFS) and Mobile Training Centre for Agriculture Development (MTCAD). The center of operations is located in the provincial capital city of

Kompong Chhnang, and from there, the staff coordinates the different programs according to the particular needs of each. There is also a satellite office in the city of Sen Monorom, Monduliri, which ensures the coordination of the projects in such province.

Education

At the time of the data collection, the Education program was undergoing a transitional stage, where some programs were ending (Life and Literacy and Adult Skills), other ones were quite recent (Early Childhood Care and Education, and the Mobile Library initiative). The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program started in 2005 with 5 kindergarten classes in the Boribor district, Kompong Chhnang province, and grew in 2007 with 5 more classes in the Teuk Phos district in Kompong Chhnang province and 5 classes in Pech Chhreada district in Monduliri province, the latter established to serve mainly the Phnong Ethnic minority. The ECCE program objectives include the development of the children's basic intellectual skills, their chances to enrol in first grade of primary circle, but also to increase the students' survival rate in primary school.

Also the recent school and mobile libraries program have not only provided more books to the school libraries, but also made the access of reading materials easier. New Humanity has trained librarians assigned to different schools to facilitate books and other pedagogical materials. The mobile library rotates to different schools in the mornings and villages in the afternoons, reading stories to the kindergarten children as part of their classes, and facilitating the access to books and reading materials about different topics to community members.

The scholarship program has benefited elementary and high school students, in the form of school supplies, uniforms, bags, shoes, and bicycles where the distances are too far.

Half of the beneficiaries are girls. A second modality of scholarships, is the one open for young people interested in pursuing technical skills on computer sciences to study in the capital city of Phnom Penh. This initiative is parallel with the creation of a student center where the students live under the management of New Humanity staff, and the support from the students' families in the measurement of their possibilities.

The Masters in Anthropology and Sociology Program is run in partnership with the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). Currently, the goals of establishment, and consolidation of the Sociology Department at the University, the theoretical and practical training for the social research, and the Master of Arts in Sociology-Anthropology program, are sustainable projects and able to function autonomously. The program aims to encourage the younger generation to be aware and committed of their social and cultural reality, through research activities that will link theory with the social reality.

The Health Education Program (HEPER) recently joined the education stream from being a separate program within the organization. In Cambodia, 40% of children under 5 years old are underweight (UNICEF, WHO, 2009), one of ten children will die before five years old, and particularly in Mondulkiri province, the infant mortality rate is of 16.9% (UNFSP, 2009). It is in this context that New Humanity Health Program focuses on preventive health education, partnering with government and other organizations to enhance people's knowledge on health and hygiene. Their basic approach is providing health training to ECCE program families, teachers and donating related materials such as mosquito nets, wells, food covers, and first aid boxes. They are currently focusing on providing a monthly health training session to the kindergarten students' families as part of the monthly parents meetings the program runs.

Agricultural Development and Food Security

It is well known that rice is the most important source of livelihood and employment for at least 75% of the population, from which 1/5 is undernourished. One local staff member described its importance in the everyday life cultural life:

“Rice is the basic element for anybody here. No matter that other food has the same amount of calories, it is rice and only rice that matters” (S1-8).

The Agricultural Development and Food Security Program (ADFS) objective is to provide knowledge about agricultural techniques and management so as to guarantee a sustainable agricultural activity in response to critical lack of information and technology. In order to provide food security for poor families, and promote the solidarity among community members, one component of the program has been the delivery of several training courses on rice cultivation techniques, promoted the creation of a model rice farm to encourage other people to follow the example and supervised the implementation of rice and pig banks. Courses on farming diversification (vegetable growing methods), pest control and use of natural fertilizer have also been successfully delivered, as well as livestock and poultry raising.

A second component of the program are the mixed farming training sessions for 8th grade students in partnership with four secondary schools. During the school year 2007-2008, 727 students participated and gardening places and compost shelters were arranged for practice. In addition, two poultry farms were built in two secondary schools and the students take care directly of them.

Education for Disabled

In the Buddhist philosophy, if a child is born with any kind of disability, he or she must be paying bad karma from previous lives. Therefore, most of the times, being disabled in Cambodia implicates social rejection and lack of adequate services and care. It is in this context that the New Humanity program for the disabled, run two centres in the province of Kompong Chhnang at the time of the data collection and one in Kandal. In 2009, two new centers were opened in Kompong Chhnang, adding a total of four centres in the province. In these centres it is attempted to support the disabled participants and their families by developing language skills, interpersonal skills and basic literacy of the participants through special care and education. At the same time, their physical capacities are tried to be improved through basic physiotherapy in order to increase their autonomy. Some others receive support at home.

New Humanity Contributions to the Development of the Local Civil Society Sector

Although the development of the local civil society sector is not one of the direct goals of the NGO, they do contribute to it indirectly through the educational programs the organization provides mainly in the countryside, where 85% of the local population lives. This section describes the interventions and processes that are significant for this respect grouped in four main themes. One theme is community involvement, which describes the way in which the NGO involves not only the direct beneficiaries of the programs but the community at large in their programs. A second theme is interconnection of program interventions which aim to build networks and partnerships at different levels with different actors. Promotion of inclusiveness and awareness, mainly in the area of human rights and social inclusion of disabled and ethnic minorities is the third theme and the fourth theme is

centered in the local human resources development, highlighting the personal and social impact of building capacity in local staff to be agents of change in their own communities.

Community Involvement

One of the strategic imperatives of New Humanity's mission reads as follows: "Each program of intervention has to be prepared and carried out by agreement and in collaboration with the local population and the local authorities" (New Humanity, 2009). This section describes the way in which the NGOs involves the whole community in the educational process of the programs they provide through developing collaborative projects where every community member has a specific role, and by promoting good relationships. In the following paragraphs, each of the specific interventions of those two processes are described with more detail.

Collaborative projects that promote teamwork and local leadership

Teamwork is definitely not a Cambodian traditional practice. As previously described, this is the result of cultural and historical factors. However, it is recognized by all the NGO international staff members that teamwork is a necessary ability for the development of the local civil society, of democracy, and the NGO programs' objectives. It is with this intention that the NGO interweaves collaborative projects in the different programs they run. Some examples of such collaborative projects are the rice banks and pig banks, the community centre maintenance, and the kindergarten daily breakfasts initiative. One international staff member commented on her hopes for promoting collaborations among villagers:

“We hope that they [the community members] realize that by uniting efforts, good things can happen for everybody’s benefit” (S1-4).

A local staff member expressed that collaborative work is also learnt through initiatives such as the pig and rice banks in the ADFS program. These banks were created to cope with the rice shortage. However it has been through them also that the locals successfully manage them through a farmers committee of 4-5 people from which 1-3 should be women. The pig banks operate similarly. A group of four or five families build a common pigpen with some materials provided by New Humanity and some have to be found by their own. Each family receives one female piglet, forage, and vaccinations. Then, some interest is taken back to sustain the project. This initiative, explained a local staff member, has allowed to help the poorest families in the village to ensure their daily supply of rice, to increase the amount of good variety of pigs among the poor families, and in the social aspect, to encourage the teamwork, solidarity and good relationships among families in the village (S1-8).

I was present in an informal rice bank discussion over a bunch of bananas in the Anhchanh ROUNG Centre where the villagers were with the program manager making a recount of who in the project still owes rice to the bank as well as who and how are the committee members going to follow up. They sounded well organized and I was surprised on the initiative they showed. The program manager encouraged them to keep on the good work and after taking with him a few bananas from the bunch for the road, we left. These kind of conversations demonstrate that small collaborative projects encourage the creation of civil organizations where the people learn the skills to keep them going if the motivation exists.

Another practice where collaborative work is encouraged, is the one where the NGO provides material help to some of the poorest families in exchange for in kind contribution

from the beneficiaries and other community members” (S1-4) explained a local staff member. This is done in order to foster a sense of reciprocity in the villagers for the help obtained and mutual collaboration between the direct beneficiaries and the NGO.

A journal entry reads as follows:

Today on our way to the school for the parents meeting, two of the local staff members and I stopped in a very run down house. One explained to me that one of the international staff was in the process of acquiring some donations from Italy to help the woman who lived there because she was an old widow, very poor and still taking care of her 3 grandchildren. They scouted the area and the woman came to greet them. Then a man came, apparently a relative or neighbour. After a few exchanges, the local staff member that I was with explained to me that the man had agreed to recruit other villagers to help build a house for the woman with the materials that New Humanity would provide. The old lady said that she would keep the house clean and teach their children to take care of the animals so they wouldn't be defecating all around the compound or invading the family living area [referring to the space under the houses where people usually cook and hang the hammocks]. She would also send the youngest grandson to the kindergarten class next year that he will be 5 years old. “That was it –said the NGO staff member- now we should only keep following up to make sure they stick to it (S1-4).

A Village leader in a Teuk Phos community recognized the volunteer work mothers perform by taking turns cooking for the children and helping the teacher shower them as one of the program highlights. He explained that when mothers go to cook, the children feel that their mothers are connected to their school life and that is good for the children. It is good for the mothers too because they feel useful not only for their own children but for all the

community's children, which is a positive first step in terms of social collaboration and community integration. It is the mothers of the kindergarten and disabled centre classes who also volunteer to take care of the New Humanity Community Centre in Anhchanh Rong, where the experimental farm, gardens, and animal pens are guarded.

Some other collaborative practices that I observed among villagers related to the NGO programs include the way in which some mothers have learned to ask other mothers in the village to cover for them the days that they are not available to go and cook for the children. Attendance at parents meetings and involvement in school issues is not exclusively a female matter anymore. A journal entry related to the work parents do in regards of the kindergarten classes reads as follows:

Today we visited one of the kindergarten classes in Boribor. It caught my attention that although the rest of the school was not open for some unknown reason (nobody knew but it didn't seem to surprise them either), the kindergarten class was running. There were two mothers cooking outside the classroom, one cutting meat and vegetables, the other one cooking the rice on a big pot. Although not in a continuous conversation, they would chat from time to time and laugh among them. When the meal was ready, they helped to extend a piece of plastic outside the classroom for the children to sit. By turns after practicing with a teacher inside the classroom, the children went out to wash their hands and sat down all along the hall on the plastic. When all the class was there they put their hands together as they usually do to greet and said thank you to the mothers who cooked for them and started eating. Nobody playing with the food, teasing another, or even talking, everybody ate quietly. After the meal there was another activity and then it was time for showering. The children, by turns again, took off their clothes except for their underwear and went to the well,

where the mothers helped the teacher to give them shampoo, soap, and pour water on them. After the shower was finished the children dressed up again and the mothers helped combing the children's hair. By that time a father who was there early to pick up his child joined the two mothers and would help the teacher to comb the children's hair. It was funny to watch him because he didn't seem to have much of an idea about what to do with the girls' long hair, until he decided to do the boys' hair and leave the girls to the mothers who would graciously make ponytails all around. When it was time to go the teacher thanked the mothers for coming, each of them took their own child and the school day was finished.

This abstract reflects a reality in gender roles also encouraged by the organization.

Taking care of the children is not an exclusively female task anymore. Some fathers, by getting involved in the NGO activities, are also becoming an active part of their children's education. International and local staff also noticed the phenomenon and regard it as a positive change of behaviour, also found in the male participation at parents' meetings, described in the next section.

Fostering good relationships through formal and non-formal education

The first step for collaborative projects is to have good relationships among villagers, which is not always the norm. One way of fostering such good relationships is by providing opportunities for villagers to have interpersonal exchanges within a safe environment, away from political or sensitive influences, nurtured by common interests and topics related to the education they are exposed to, either in the formal or non-formal modality.

a) Parents meetings

One intervention that the NGO considers very valuable are the parents meetings, which are a component of all the programs excepting for ADFS and MTCAD. The parents meetings in the ECCE and Health program have slightly changed as for September 2008. Now they run once a month, facilitated ideally by the class teacher. However, depending on the grade of preparation and willingness from the teachers, the fieldworker and/or project managers can step in and help (S1-4). The first part is a meeting regarding the kindergarten topics and issues, then lunch and nap time comes, and in the afternoon the parents return to the school for the Health component of the meeting.

In Kompong Chhnang province, the ECCE meetings usually start with a reflection about the importance of education. Then the facilitator continues with an update in the curriculum and comments in ways the parents can help their children at home to practice the knowledge they acquire at school. These meetings are complemented by an educational video called “Peep and the Big Wide World”.

Peep and the Big Wide World is a series of animated cartoons series for pre-school children were originated in Boston and adapted to the Khmer public in a partnership between World Education and The Cambodian Ministry of Education. The show combines animated stories that explore science-related concepts with live action scenes presenting real Khmer people in average village-like setting. The goal of the series is to model inquiry, nurture curiosity and encourage discovery learning. For the parents it is a chest of ideas about how to relate with their children, and contribute to their development in a constructive way. New Humanity staff carries in a motorcycle a small TV, DVD player, and a battery to run the show one day every day in the 10 different classes, according to the Parents

Meetings' calendar. Each meeting the episode from the previous time is recalled and a share of experiences takes place among the parents. A journal entry from my attendance to a parents meeting session reads as follows:

"Today I went to a school in Teuk Phos district where a parents meeting was scheduled. 26 of 31 mothers attended, which is a good number. New Humanity staff used different methodologies, such as a story-telling, personal reflexion from one of the local staff's own life, a cartoon movie followed by a documentary about how to discover the world with your child at home. This documentary was presented because many times the parents do not know many activities to do with their children to help them develop their motor and intellectual skills. Everybody seemed interested and they even laughed with the cartoons. At lunch time I drank a coconut and after exchanging a few smiles with the locals, due to my inability to speak Khmer, I hanged my hammock and joined the rest of the village sleeping my nap. At 1pm the second part of the meetings took place with the health practices. The Health field officer aided the teacher in teaching about drinking and cooking with safe water. There was an activity where the mothers had a card with a happy face and a card with an unhappy face, and they had to raise the one that corresponded depending to the nature of the practice the teacher was to describe. The mothers seemed fascinated with the game and there were even some exchanges among themselves about the practical content, which I believe was one of the objectives. I think they don't have too many chances in their everyday lives to relax and play a game, or to talk among themselves, so they seemed to enjoy while learning about health practices"

In Monduliri, due to the local situation there, the dynamics of parents meetings are slightly different. Parents meet once a month too, but they usually do it at 6am to fit the

highland lifestyle. The project officer facilitates the conversation among parents in order to help them realize by themselves the importance of education for their children, especially in the highland culture where people tends to appreciate it less as a value.

One international staff member explained the dynamics of the health component in the monthly parents meetings:

We always try to use different activities to keep the women interested. Sometimes we do games, some other times questions and answers, or divide them by pairs. That way they get to share ideas and talk to each other, an opportunity that they hardly have coming and going everyday to the ricefields and attending the home (S1-4).

More than one member of the international staff regard these meetings as capacity building for the parents and the beginning of the social network they will later need to keep the project running once the NGO support pulls out (S1-1). For the local staff, parents meetings are regarded as communication opportunities between the NGO and the parent community as well as an opportunity for the parents to learn NFE and bond among themselves (S1-4). One of the local staff members however, mentioned the unwillingness of some teachers to run the meetings, especially the Health component, because although the contents are easily manageable, they do not feel comfortable teaching mothers and fathers that within the community who have higher social status (S1-4).

Parents who have started to attend to such meetings more regularly have expressed very highly about the outcomes of gathering together. A young mother emphasized in the discussion that takes place, explaining that by listening to other parents' ideas on what they do at home inspired her to be closer to her daughter and motivated to become a better mother for her daughter. Another mother focused in the emotional outcomes, expressing that by listening and commenting with others, she does not feel alone in the task of raising

children. These mothers were interviewed by me with the assistance of the NGO international and national staff in the Boribor district, where the kindergarten classes have been running for a longer period of time. Mothers in Teuk Phos and Mondulkiri communities were shy in their responses, still they all expressed positively about the parents meetings as learning and social exchanges opportunities. Some of the main benefits recognized by mothers about the parents meetings are summarized in the table below:

Table 4. Benefits for parents about attending parent meetings organized by New Humanity

Benefit	Number of respondents out of 17
Parents learn what children do at school and their progress	4
Parents learn practices that enhance their family life, especially in the area of health	14
Parents learn how they can relate better with their children and help them develop at home	10
Parents meet each other and talk about parenting issue	8
Parents contribute with ideas for the class	1

It is possible to appreciate through this table that the parents value the knowledge they acquire through the parents meetings, as well as the improved interpersonal relationships both with their own children and with other parents. This data leads to consider that another way of fostering good relationships is through the education programs and their contents. However, regardless of these results an NGO foreign staff commented on the cultural limitation that they face teaching parents new practices, mainly in the area of health:

Of course we do our best, but we can only do so much. We can teach one woman healthier practices and convince her that it is the correct thing to do for her family. But

when she goes home, she will find resistance to change from her mother in law, husband, older aunts, so we do not always know how much they do practice at home what they learn with us (S1-3).

One local staff member commented about the way in which agricultural training sessions allow the participants to interact with each other:

Being brought together is very good for them because they can talk you know, outside the classes they seldom have a chance. They are always too busy can you imagine? (S1-8).

Another local staff member explained that through the literacy program, the participants, mostly women, tended to form working groups and help each other with reading and writing skills, which was promoted on purpose “because when one woman helps another woman they become friends” (S1-5).

b) Teaching the ‘good’ ways

When asked about their understanding about the civil society sector, the NGO teachers and field staff definitely did not understand the meaning of it, but they reflected on the sense of community. All of them consider that the NGO programs are successful in bringing people together and promoting collaborative, good relationships, starting with the youngest. In such respect, one of the main benefits the teachers consider as an outcome of the NGO kindergarten program is that the community children learn to respect the adults and “the good ways”. Such good ways, according to them, will stay with the children the rest of their lives and they will grow up treating others kindly and with respect.

Several school principals expressed appreciation for the social outcomes of the NGO programs in terms of community mobilization and first steps of solidarization that are promoted through the program activities. One school principal described:

In some cases the aunt of a child whose widowed mother is very poor will provide the monthly kilo of rice for the class, or the neighbour whose children go to the same primary school where the kindergarten is located will walk the 5 year old child to the class as well (P1-3).

Another principal took the parents involvement in the kindergartens program even further, suggesting that parents should also collaborate not only bringing the children to school and providing the rice, but also in following up with absent children to promote the “helping each other” mentality among villagers. The government-sponsored school teachers agreed with the school principals on the evident benefits for the children to study one year of kindergarten in terms of pre-knowledge, attitude, as well as communication and social skills. One first grade teacher expressed:

They [the children who attended kindergarten the year before] are not afraid of the other children, they are very participatory and usually do better in Khmer language (ST1-2).

Village authorities also recognize that children learning “the good ways” through the NGO programs as one of the organization’s most important contributions to the community. Many of the village leaders affirmed that educated children in terms of social relationships meant more collaborative villagers and better quality of life in the villages. They all agreed that villages with better educated individuals have less violence, less vices, more flexibility and respect among villagers. The people have more vision and it is easier to work with them

because they have more developed thinking. One village leader expressed himself through an analogy about the NGO kindergarten classes:

Kindergarten classes build the basis of the type of villagers we want in our communities. It is like a mango seed; you prepare the soil, plant it, and hope for the best. Our children are the seeds and I have a lot of positive thinking about the good soil kindergartens classes provide. We hope for the best, and I am optimistic about the children who attend kindergarten class (VA1-2).

Another village leader expressed contentment about families learning new rice planting techniques if that would mean more yields per year, which would mean less worries for the families. Less worries for families will then improve social relationships in their opinion because families would not be so worried and desperate. A village leader in the province of Mondulhiri explained the benefits of the NGO programs in terms of social integration:

Community kindergarten is very good initiative because the people here [in Mondulhiri Province] are animist and they are very mistrusting among each other, but when they see several community members involved in the kindergarten, they trust a little more and actually send their children to school (VA1-3).

A Wise Man also commented about the use of his top hierarchical position to promote involvement in the program by being actively involved in the attendance of students, and following up with the corresponding village authorities to track with the absentees' families and explain to them why education is important for their children. These statements demonstrate that village authorities were aware of the impact that education has in the social behaviour of the community towards fostering better civil exchanges and collaboration. Although some local NGO staff had previously mentioned to me that village leaders wanted village people to remain ignorant so they would be easier to manipulate, the statements

village leaders provided me with show that they are in favour of an education that will teach the children social acceptable guidelines for a more peaceful and progressive community.

Connecting Programme Interventions

Building first, second and third level networks

New Humanity recognizes the benefit of working with other departments, organizations, institutions, and groups of people with similar interests and goals. They also understand the value in teaching the locals by example about the benefits of interacting with others versus individualism for a common good. It is for this reason that they have invested attention and efforts in connecting first their own programs within the organization, then with other organizations at the local level, then at the national level finishing with partnerships at the international level given their roots as an international NGO. The following table summarizes these connections at each of the levels and a more detailed description of each follows.

Internally, New Humanity promotes the intersection of the different programs they run in order to share resources for the communities benefit and train the locals in the eventual sustainability of the projects. An example of these intersections is the home visits initiative that caters the families involved in the ECCE and Health programs, where the kindergarten teacher visits the home of their students, evaluates the hygiene practices, and interacts with the family.

Table 5. Summary of New Humanity programme interventions connections at different levels

Internally	District Level	National Level	International Level
ECCE teachers home visits Health meetings within ECCE parents meetings Masters students conducting fieldwork with the NGO programs in the countryside ECCE and DiDaCa breakfasts prepared with ADFS produce	Other NGOs working in the field of education in the same district Village Authorities for consultation and support Government representatives for information and joined programs	Other NGOs working in the field of education in the country Member of NEP and CCC (umbrella organizations) Member of DAC (Disability Action Council) The Catholic Church MEDICAM (2009)	Donors Friends of the organization Foreign volunteers

Building networks within the organization's programmes

An international staff member explained the rationale behind the home visits:

Home visits by teachers, field officers, and program managers promote community involvement in the programs and reinforce the involvement of as many people possible in the learning environment. The teachers build rapport, trust and in some cases enhance the relationship between school and home life. They are also basics of leadership skills for the teachers who are usually very young women (S1-3).

A local staff member complemented:

Some parents have not had education themselves or have had bad experiences related to school. That is the reason why they don't know how to relate with their children's school. But when the teacher visits them and builds good relationships, parents stop considering the school as something far from their lives or relating it to their bad

experiences and become more motivated to be involved in the school and attend the meetings and help the teacher (S1-5).

Other examples are the rice banks, and the MA project working with programs in the countryside. In the rice banks the families pay an interest, explained a local staff member (S1-8). This interest is divided in four parts: one quarter is given to the kindergartens for the children's daily breakfast; one quarter for the committee members in order to pay for their work on rice bank management; and the other half was added to the rice bank capital. The surplus vegetables from the ADFS program are also used also in the kindergarten breakfasts.

In the Masters of Sociology and Anthropology program, students from the Royal University of Phnom Penh have to conduct fieldwork as part of their curriculum in social research practice. Many of these experiences are carried within the New Humanity programs run in the countryside. These arrangements allow the students access to the field, reliable data, and collaboration from the NGO staff in data collection or any other related needs. It also provides the chance to a glimpse of reality and a chance to practice the research skills that they have acquired through the masters program.

Building networks at the local level

At the district level New Humanity works with other NGOs, village authorities, and government representatives. Formal agreements and close interactions with other NGOs in the field are also a work in progress for the organization, explained an international staff member. New Humanity is finalizing a formal partnership with Aide et Action, and there is currently an informal working agreement with World Education (who sponsor the Peep and the Big Wide World videos previously mentioned) and Krousear Yeung (who trains kindergarten teachers). The organization's plans are to formalize partnerships with

International NGOs that are not official yet, and once they master procedures, to start working with local NGOs.

In terms of government institutions and the NGO, an international staff member explained that the approaches are diverse. First of all the organization is recognized and approved at the National level by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All the programs are under the legislation of different Ministries, including the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), and in 2009, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) (S1-1). New Humanity presence is also existent at the provincial level with the Health Department, at the district level with the Agricultural Department, at the Commune and Village level through the Commune and Village Leaders, and at the School level through the principals, as all the schools New Humanity works in partnership with, are public and therefore run by the government. The same international staff member commented on the relationships between government and the NGO:

We [the NGO and the Cambodian government] both learn, we bring our expertises in management and they know well the field (sic). It is also a way of making things more sustainable because when we pull out, they will remain here, and we are here because of the people. The government is elected by the people and is made of Khmer people. And we will not be here forever, but they will, the government structures will be here once we all NGO have pulled off (sic) or ran out of funds or moved away. We cannot and should not ignore them, but work together in the measurement of our possibilities (S1-1).

This explanation was followed by a comment on a particular partnership between the district government and the NGO ADFS program:

In terms of working with the Ministry of Agriculture at the district level, New Humanity provides an allowance to the Ministry's staff to run some of the training sessions in any of the agricultural topics they cover, as some of those people are very knowledgeable, but there is always the low salary fact. So the NGO makes up for the economical aspect and empowers the local talent, at the same time, linking Ministry people with local villagers. Official middle schools also allow the use of their installations and class time to deliver the agricultural education program to the 8th grade classes as part of the formal curriculum, which is a big gain (S1-1).

Partnerships involving local government, community members, and NGO are also highly valued by the village authorities. A school principal expressed his content with the NGO approach of working cooperatively with the school, the education office, and the community because it is by preaching by example, that people learn how to build collaborative relationships for a common good (P1-1). A Village Leader in Monduliri province defined the success of the New Humanity kindergartens in that province as the result of collaboration between local authorities, community, teachers and NGO administrative staff who acts as the liaison among all of the actors (VA1-2).

The noteworthy differences between government and New Humanity run kindergartens were also highlighted by almost all community authorities. The main comments include the well trained teachers at New Humanity and their high professional work ethic, which leaves the parents confident that their children are in good hands. The New Humanity genuine interest in the community development through the kindergarten classes was also noted, as there is clearly no self-enrichment or power interest involved in the project. As a result of it, community authorities restated their support for the NGO programs in the task of

encouraging families to participate and by collaborating with New Humanity as it might be necessary.

Although partnerships benefit most of the associated players at some level, it remains a challenge to motivate the local government to take a more active role in the education of the community. The local government representatives interviewed in Kompong Chhnang and Mondolkiri expressed their gratitude for the NGO services and willingness to collaborate with its educational programs. Their most common idea of collaboration consisted in the economical, material, and human resources that the NGO provides and how many more things could be provided by the NGO in exchange for information about the schools population, size, number of kindergarten age children, survival rate, among other forms of data that the government authorities can provide.

Building networks at the national level

At the national level, an international staff member described the role and relationships of the NGO in relation with other organizations that form the national level of the Cambodian civil society sector, most of it formed by foreigner organizations. New Humanity is a member of CCC (Cooperation Committee for Cambodia), a professional association of non-government organisations in Cambodia, created to strengthen the collective voice and enhance effective cooperation across the civil society. They are also an active member of DAC (Disability Action Council) and of NEP (NGO Education Partnership), a network of NGOs working in the educational field in Cambodia. Within NEP, New Humanity is leading the creation of an ECCE subgroup with the goal of mapping all the NGOs working in the education sector, and to identify possible collaborations and partnerships. Most of the members of the two umbrella networks of

NGOs are international, as there has been low local initiative to form grassroots organizations, although they are increasing in numbers (S1-1). Still it is hoped that employing locals in most of the international organizations with presence in the country, will be the first step towards training and empowering people in the workings of the civil society sector. One of the main challenges however, remains for these networks to become fully engaged and supportive of each other, as in many cases NGOs tend to be distracted in public issues and the contradiction of looking after their particular interests versus the collective interests that a network of support represents.

New Humanity also works in partnership with the national Catholic Church to provide formation activities, for example, training for staff or a more recent workshop series on Cambodian socio- cultural reality aimed for university students to approach relevant socio-cultural issues in Cambodia. These activities are planned in order to facilitate the students' understanding regarding the rapid changes that the country is undergoing in a safe and stimulating environment.

Building networks at the international level

International level networks include the donors, friend organizations in other countries and foreign volunteers. Some examples are Italian collaborators that would go to Kompong Chhnang and train the Health and Disabled program staff, donors that keep the projects running through their financial contributions, organizations that support the projects by assisting with the acquisition of a van for a project or other needs, and a recent experience of exposure, where two local NGO staff traveled to Hong Kong sponsored by a Chinese friend of the project, to experience the kindergarten life in a different country, educational system, and culture.

Narrowing the Gap Government-Civilians

The NGO efforts to narrow the gap between government institutions and villagers are one of their best indirect contributions to set the conditions for the civil society sector to develop according to an international staff member. She mentioned examples such as inviting nurses from the local hospital to train the teachers, or having the District Ministry of Education talk to parents and children in a school end-of-year ceremony. It was also mentioned the fact that most of the people are afraid or simply disappointed in the government services, so the local NGO staff encourage them to use the services and institutions despite their low quality or high corruption because it is their right. She finished with the recount of a recent experience:

Just last week it happened, there was this situation where the hospital staff came to one of our teachers training days and described a disease and told the teachers to come and see her if they ever knew about anything like that, as the service was free. Two days later, one of the teachers brought her relative with that same disease and the hospital didn't want to admit her, they wanted to charge her, she didn't have money, came all the way from very far, very messy. It was just a few days before that the hospital staff have come (sic) and say it was free! So I sent the program manager [local staff] to deal with it. It has to be them [the local Cambodians] the ones who should unite themselves and face the situations, and use the services as it is their right. If they [the official services] want to charge them, then they have to learn to ask for their rights to free health care in this case, even if at the beginning they don't gain anything, but at least they are already raising a voice, because if nobody says anything, the hospital will

continue charging them for free services without any shame. This is the only way that they will become empowered (S1-4).

With every year that the programs run within the community a small step forward can be appreciated in terms of government-community relationships. However, there is still a long way to go. Given the fact that there is no cultural tradition of government and communities working together, the community members believe that it should be initiative of the government institutions to start the contact, and the government does not see the need to work in association with the civilians at all. Patron-client and hierarchical structures are still very embedded within the people at the civil and governing level, difficult to overcome despite the acculturation efforts of the NGO in bringing both sides together. Or closer at least.

In the province of Mondulhiri, a local staff member described that for the ECCE and Health parents meeting, he wants to invite a speaker from the Ministry of Health to explain health related issues, because the people in the highlands is animist and they prefer to offer animals as a tribute to the gods for the health of any family member than going to the clinic. He concluded: "Health Centre and community don't (sic) understand each other here, so we put them together in parents meetings so they talk to each other and communicate" (S1-6) This local staff member also commented that such an idea is also with the goal of establishing contact between government employees and villagers to build trust that eventually will build relationships among them, because, he argued, although the idea of partnerships between government, villagers and NGO is good, it is not possible if there is no contact among the parts involved.

Several kindergarten teachers commented on these initiatives of bridging official institutions with the villagers as beneficial both for the villagers and the government

workers. One teacher commented that it is good for the guests to see the reality in the villages, and for the villagers because before the training session, she had never seen a real nurse. This is not surprising as the health system is very low quality and difficult access for those in the villages. If anybody becomes ill they prefer to consult the local folk healer or just accept it as fate or karma. In case there is the opportunity for someone to go to the closest clinic, he/she will probably be charged for services that should be free, and as the villagers are very poor, little are the hopes that he or she will go under the adequate treatment. It is in this area that the NGO is working also, in raising awareness of the local staff about their rights to use public institutions without fee charges as explained above.

Increasing Inclusiveness and Critical Consciousness

Given the fact that Cambodians are a quite exclusive society, consideration for ethnic minorities and people with disabilities have never been priorities in their lifestyles. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes all individuals regardless of ethnicity or physical state as valuable. Based on such premise, the NGO focuses to develop awareness and critical thinking within the people they work with through their programs to explore possibilities beyond their immediate reality that will recognize the value of each person regardless of ethnicity, sex, religious belief, language, or physical state.

The difference between the way things are and the way things can be

Raising awareness through the educational programs they administer, is one of the indirect contributions that the NGO features for the Cambodian communities. Awareness was identified by some of the foreign NGO staff as critical thinking and by others as the knowledge of what is happening in the person's surroundings. One international staff

member commented on the different views of reality between locals and foreigners, and the way the program tries to reconcile both:

Awareness is important. What is a problem for us, for them is regular life, just in other circumstances. We have to start from the fact of: this is right, this is wrong. Certainly the life nowadays is better than how it was before, but it can still be improved. The first step is to teach the people how to read and write and to improve their immediate environment. A second step is to have them exchanging ideas with others through meetings and training sessions, and then they will figure out that some things do not have to be 'just the way the life is' but there is one or more alternatives. We respect culture and cultural traditions, but we also raise their attention if something is wrong.

Like unhealthy practices (S1-4).

She continued to comment that although there is a big resistance for change due to the conservative nature of the culture, as families try the new ideas suggested by the NGO such as farming methodologies or health practices, other families become motivated to try as well.

Another international staff member also recognized awareness as a characteristic the local civil society sector should have. It represents in the knowledge and belief that every person has and deserves rights. Human rights mainly, the right to education and life, and social rights, as their rights to use official services and to voice their interests. For her, education is the only way: "Teach reading and writing and little by little they will learn more. They will become more aware of what is going on, they will become more critical" (S1-3). Blending both views, a third international staff member stated that the Master students at the RUPP learn to be critical of their surroundings through the knowledge they acquire in the program (S1-2).

A local staff member, who has witnessed first-hand the government and private sector abuses to the highland minorities due to their lack of education, critical thinking and communication skills, also considers critical thinking as a hallmark of building awareness among the people. For him, the parents meetings are an excellent practice to encourage those skills, as he describes:

Parents in the highlands are very uneducated. It is very important that they understand that school is important for their children. At the parents' meetings I ask them questions and make them comment among themselves in order for them to realize it on their own and come out with the idea. It is different that if I tell them it [education] is important. If it comes from them, that is what I try to do you know... (S1-6).

Another local staff member commented on the effect parents meetings have in terms of gender equality:

When parents gather once a month for the scholarship follow up meetings, the parents who have younger girls see how successful the older girls are with their scholarships and they think that it is good that their girls will grow up attending school too. (S1-5)

After attending about 7 parents meetings, I was able to make connections between what I have heard in them with what I was observing in the everyday life. One day we happen to unexpectedly visit the house of one school family and there was the food cover keeping the flies away from the next meal, such as mentioned a couple of ways before in the meeting. I asked a child there what was such device for and he answered me that it was a cover so flies would not get in touch with the food and make them [the family] sick. Another day I wrote the following field-observation:

We [the project advisor] and I were interviewing a teacher in Teuk Phos district while the children were on break, when we started hearing a lot of noise outside. The teacher

excused herself wanting to check that there was not being a fight or something that required her attention, until we found out that there was a mom with a stick on one hand and a child on the other. Apparently the child was her son, and when she found him in their house, she got mad and started yelling at him for not being at school when he was supposed to. The mother repeated to us the lecture she gave to her son about the importance of school, and that he brought him back by sticks, just to find out that the kid had gone home –which was nearby- during the break because he was hungry. He was just not expecting to find his mother there. ‘Some parents really value their children’s ECCE education. Scenes like this remind me about the value of parents meetings’ the project advisor said to me.

It was reported by most of the interviewed teachers that they find it difficult to spread the awareness among parents about the importance of sending their children to kindergarten everyday, or their contribution with the program by cooking breakfast when scheduled and providing rice. However, beneficiaries of the different programs who have had firsthand experience with the benefits of education seem to grow closer to the idea of valuing it. One woman who participated in the chicken rearing training expressed that with the extra money she gets from selling chickens she buys food and supports her children schooling. A young lady who attended the agriculture workshops expressed that besides rice cultivation, she has understood that vegetables are also important for nutrition. She started growing vegetables in her garden that she sells at the market every week and this activity has allowed her extra money to buy other foods, clothes, and to support her younger siblings at school. A father expressed that thanks to the health classes he and his wife had attended all their family is healthier now. Their baby son has not being sick once and they spend less money in treating diseases that they know now are preventable. It is possible to appreciate that through the

improvement of their immediate lives after having participated in one of the NGO's educational programs, the villagers' awareness about the importance of education increases and some of them as the two previous examples, commit their resources to support their families in becoming educated as well.

For young Cambodians, the scholarships they receive from the NGO to continue with their basic education studies or secondary programs, mean opportunities for personal development that otherwise they would had not have access to in terms of tuition fees, board, transportation, and living. They also mean better possibilities for their personal future lives and for the environment where they interact. One of the Master students awarded with a New Humanity scholarship, on the eve of his thesis defence, commented that he would like to continue doing research that would impact policy for his home province and that he thought a masters degree would give him the authority enough to make those policies effective. Another one expressed the things he learned about the world as the highlight of the graduate program. A group of three girls with nervous smiles and quite good English, when asked about their thoughts on women graduating from a Masters program, agreed that in this generation women are able to do the same as men. One of them commented: "Our female family members didn't have such opportunities because of the war and all that, but now we can do it so we better take advantage of the opportunity" (GS1-1).

Another one expressed her dream of the day in which women will be equally valued by men, and her hope in the fact that women graduating from Masters programs is one sign of progress in such area. The third one thanked me for New Humanity's support towards her degree [referring to the scholarship she received] and shared her commitment both to use it on behalf of the women who did not have such an opportunity and to make sure all her daughters –if she had any- would go to university too. Through these statements it is

appreciable that the young Cambodians who receive support for their higher education increase their level of awareness both in the form of knowledge about their surroundings and the world. They are exposed to different ideas and taught to make sense of them, relating such ideas to their direct experience and reality.

Although the previous paragraphs are signs of hope, there are still many challenges on the road to raise awareness about the importance of education and its effects. One situation that caught my attention is that in the villages, everybody sees the immediate benefits of education, such as learning how to read and write, learning healthy practices, but almost nobody sees the long-term effects. Only one mother mentioned that education is good for his son's future, although she was not able to describe in which way it would have an influence in that future she was referring to. With the exception of a few Village Leaders, not too many people has considered education as a tool for the village development, for access to a wider array of life opportunities, and the improvement of their current livelihoods. Those few Village Leaders, although they mention the issue in the village meetings from time to time, expressed that they believe it is the job of the school principal and teachers to directly disseminate the importance of education among the villagers. A fieldnote concludes:

It is all a circle because then we go back to the fact that most principals and teachers are busy in their second-income-generating activities, so the message is never really transmitted.

Preaching social inclusiveness by example

Being inclusive and diversity friendly have never been characteristics typical of Cambodians. However, it is by having a whole program dedicated to people with disabilities

and a project for ethnic minorities that the organization is trying to make a statement about the importance and value of attending these minorities, focusing always on the poorest people. Cambodia is ethnically formed by 95% Khmers, but the highland minorities also need attention. As a response, New Humanity opened 5 kindergarten classes in Monduliri Province. Through the ECCE and Health programs there, the NGO is not only striving to build strong foundations in the new generation of highlanders, but also to educate their families and communities through the non-formal educational opportunities that are included in the program.

In Monduliri the grade 1 school teachers emphasized the great opportunity the New Humanity kindergarten classes are for the Phnong children, explaining that most times, Phnong children come to primary school speaking very little if any Khmer at all, being Khmer the official language of instruction. This situation creates a large imbalance for the teacher, as she faces a large class of children in different levels, and very few times the teachers possess the knowledge and ability to adequate the classes to each students' level. As a result, lower level students –often Phnong- are frequently ignored by the teacher, which combined with the fact that Phnong parents tend to be less educated than Khmer parents, increase their vulnerability to drop out of school sooner. Another teacher expressed the amount of time and effort it saved for her the fact that the children who went through a kindergarten year before their classes, had basics in Khmer language. Second grade attendance and evaluation records in Kompong Chhnang province also demonstrated that children who went through kindergarten are less likely to be absent and perform better in the academic contents than those who did not have the opportunity.

Another piece of evidence of solidarity and inclusiveness is found in the disabled community. In a Buddhist country where disabled people are often relegated to secondary

order of priority, New Humanity has a whole full program dedicated to them, to involve the disabled in the social life, promote respect towards them among the communities and develop their independency and self-esteem. For a local staff member, the close follow up and support from the organization are the keys for some of the success stories such. Some of these stories include significant progress in physical or social development, or disabled participants being integrated to the regular school system, at least in a part time basis. He commented:

It [the program for disabled] is about improving their physical development, but also social and emotional, my disabled are many times ignored by their families, looked like shameful creatures, we love them very much and teach their families to love them too because they are good persons inside (S1-7).

The process is to awake the awareness of the people about their local members and consider them valuable. Many times it is not the disabled individuals but their families the ones who are the most impacted by the program social contribution.

By being inclusive, the organization is also raising awareness on social justice issues that the villagers consider most of the times “just the way the life is”. Through the organization’s programs and activities, the villagers are learning the differences between what is right and wrong, what is normal and what should not be normal, according to Western standards that is. Every effort with the final goal of providing the locals with an alternative to enrich themselves, with the best of the Western and the Eastern philosophies. This is because for many people, unhealthy or negative practices are not an option but the only way they know how things are or work. In Mondulkiri, where transnational companies have million dollar agreements with the government to seize highland properties and convert them in rubber plantations, the villagers are even more vulnerable because they do

not speak Khmer and are uneducated. They do not know their rights, how to proceed, and they eventually sell their lands for almost nothing, or are evicted. Education is vital for the people to be aware of their reality and have a voice in these matters. Without this, the government continue to enrich itself without the minimum consideration for the people they theoretically represent.

Human Resources Capacity Building

Training local management, future leaders

Once a month the assistant director travels to the Kompong Chhnang office to deliver training, mainly to the program managers in terms of administrative skills. Those sessions are usually full day, and include theory, practical exercises which are usually linked to the activities and topic each person relates within their work, and a meal together in the restaurant across the street. I noticed that most of the staff appreciates these occasions by observing their enthusiasm anticipating the sessions –although it was not always clear in the sessions-, and in the staff's reactions after the sessions. For example, one day, the assistant director mentioned the importance of the managers helping each other and working together to solve questions and problems before calling the main office. A week after the session, one program manager goes to ask another manager about a procedure. When they finished the manager with the question, seeing that I was witnessing the whole scene, very seriously he says to me: "Good. I didn't have to phone the main office" (S1-8).

While talking with the managers at the office about such training opportunities they all coincided in the fact that they are useful for them because they learn tools that will help them perform a better job, despite the challenge and frustration of learning a new skill that they are not familiar with from a foreign person in a second language. All but one also

coincided in the fact that such knowledge makes them more marketable as professionals. Another reason is that they have lunch together which gives them the opportunity to chat informally among themselves, which otherwise might not happen as often unless the electricity goes off and the staff is forced to interrupt their office work.

Internally, a couple of local staff members commented on the benefit that represented for them to work with foreigners. One expressed the following:

We have the opportunity to have friendships with people from other countries. Although they speak Khmer we can sometimes practice English with them too, or by listening them speak. The people in the villages are not used to see foreigners; they have mostly only seen Khmers in their lives. They are curious but never show it. Cambodia is growing and more and more foreigners will come. Knowing English and their [the foreigners'] ways of working is a very important thing to know. We are lucky to work in New Humanity (S1-5).

A different local staff member referred to the way of work of foreign staff and the trainings they run as very enriching in terms of opening the local staff minds to ideas that they would had never imagined because they are not the usual Khmer ways but they have found useful in their professional practice.

Building capacity within local staff as agents of local change

Another area where the human resources development can be appreciated is in the kindergarten teachers training. Teachers are usually village girls who finished 8th grade and attended a month-long training course at Krousar Yeung, a local NGO created by the INGO Enfants & Développement, focused on Early Childhood Care and Education in Cambodia. After this training, it is the job of the Educational Advisor and Field Officer mainly to

follow up with the teachers' training. One international staff member commented on the training of teachers as one of the highlights of the NGO program. The process was described as a chain effect: teachers teach children how to grow up in the correct direction, teachers train parents about the value of the person challenging the current line of thought where money and power go above the human person. She added:

Trained teachers are also our hope for sustainability of the project. The ideal situation would be that when we [the NGO] pull out, the projects keep running. The teachers are already trained, and they can train others if needed. The people hopefully will learn to organize among themselves, create a committee among parents or something like that, and pay the teachers directly with rice or other products (S1-3).

In order to achieve this goal, peer teaching has been a successful technique not only in the immediate goal of transmitting knowledge, but also in building good relationships among the teachers, developing skills such as team work, and acquiring a sense of belonging to a group, a hallmark of the civil society sector. One international staff member commented:

Peer teaching is very well accepted among them [the teachers]. Older teachers help to train new teachers and a deep sense of belonging to a group is developed among them (S1-3).

Once a month, the 10 kindergarten teachers working in Kompong Chhnang gather at the NGO's central office for a whole day of Professional Development prepared by the program staff. An international staff member explained that in those sessions, the teachers receive new knowledge, ideas to develop in their classes, and get the chance to share their methods and practices –both successful and not so successful- with other peers. This helps them improve and build good relationships among themselves, even a sense of identity. All of the

teachers interviewed agreed that such sessions are beneficial for them for the reasons summarized in the following table:

Table 6. Benefits of New Humanity teachers' professional development monthly sessions

Benefit of teacher training	Number of respondents out of 12
Helps me feel more confident in my teaching	8
Gives me new ideas to try with my class	10
I have a good time with my fellow teachers	3
I feel appreciated and valued by the organization	6

In terms of catering to the particular and personal needs of each teacher, a fieldnote reads as follows:

After visiting the kindergarten class in Teuk Phos we went to eat at the teacher's home. After we ate and talked for a while, the field officer arrived, sat down on the hammock, and asked the teacher to bring her teaching bag. They reviewed the class plans together, the field officer gave her some suggestions, and practiced with her a song to try with the children. The teacher's face enlightened with everything the field officer suggested to her. Later in the day I learned that this teacher is new and she was hired at the last moment to replace another one who quit a week before classes started. She has not had the opportunity to attend the formal training yet and she didn't quite finished 8th grade either, but her attitude was what made the NGO select her from the other 3 candidates, including the daughter of the Village Leader. When we interviewed her, she expressed how much support she feels from the NGO in terms of training and direct follow up.

This passage illustrates the close follow up and importance the NGO places to building capacity within their staff. As mentioned before, all program staff excepting for the advisors are Cambodians. Therefore, having locals supporting and mentoring locals is also another form of empowerment by providing the opportunity for the locals to realize the power within themselves and of capacity building by sharing such power and knowledge with their peers.

Conclusion

This chapter presented some of the main interventions that New Humanity performs through the educational programs that they provide in Cambodia, which indirectly contribute to the basis of a local civil society sector. One of them is the efforts to generate trust among the people in a setting where social relationships are very weak. The organization does so by promoting activities where not only the program beneficiaries but also the community will gather and interact among themselves, either parents meetings, training sessions, or collaborative projects. Once the level of trust increases, the citizens are more likely to engage in good relationships and unite efforts to work towards the common good (Brown et al., 2008). These associations reinforce Khrouz' (2008) belief that civil society should be born from individuals and small groups who realize that, without civic engagement, a society cannot make progress towards justice and a better life for its people.

Teamwork however, in a country with little tradition of association among the people is a novelty and therefore, a slow task to develop. Roles and expectations are usually misconceived by either the NGO or beneficiaries, which generates frustration and disappointment. However, it is with cultural sensitivity awareness and the help of local

management staff primarily that the bridges between East and West modes of operation are built and limiting situations worked out.

Connections among programmes within the organization, as well as formal or informal agreements with other stakeholders at the community, district, national, and international level are also features of the NGO priorities. These partnerships and inter-sectorial networks are cultivated with the aim of building a collaborative network of support and engagement in learning (Kilpatrick & Millar, 2007). They also teach the locals how to utilize local resources to solve local needs, a break from the traditional expectation that third parties would take care of the needs around. However the main challenge for these efforts remains to motivate the different actors involved in such networks of support to contribute in the best of their capacities. Especially some government actors who tend to regard the NGO as a replacement for the services that they should provide but cannot do due to lack of resources.

The education that the NGO provides through their programs, is intended to increase the awareness of the own reality and of others' realities to develop a sense of social justice and social responsibility within the communities they work with. In a country where education in the formal and non-formal setting has never included any component of critical thinking, direct interventions such as the inclusion of ethnical minorities, people with disabilities and the poorest of the poor emphasize the value of human resources regardless of the differences each one brings along, and the potential for development if efforts are united, which is the end goal of a civil society sector in any democratic country (Tan, 2007). For this process to happen, a deep acculturation of the communities is needed and the bridge to do so are the local human resources, who receive a high deal of importance and value

from the NGO perspective, evident in the investment that is allocated for their professional development in order to build capacity within the local people.

Being the acculturation process an endeavour very attached to the culture and traditional practices, it is not surprising that the main challenges New Humanity faces are of cultural nature. Some of these challenges include the almost non-existent tradition of critical thinking, social justice, and collaborative work outside religious circles, which consumes a lot of time and effort in explaining procedures from the very basic units of understanding, a process that some foreign staff find slow and frustrating. The resistance from government and civilians to associate and be more proactive in terms of community development initiatives comes from a tradition of patron-client relationships system and hierarchical structure. Cultural mismatches are also difficult to balance when it comes to West-East values and the fine line between bridging tradition with modernity and increasing dependence on foreign aid. However it is with support of other organizations at the local, national and international level that New Humanity continues working in Cambodia, towards delivering education to the ones in most need that will promote a social change.

CHAPTER 5

Case Study 2: Don Bosco

Don Bosco is the second of the two INGOs studied in this research project. This chapter will explore the processes the organization performs through its educational programs that have an impact on the processes of enculturation and acculturation, as well as partial results and limitations. Although the development or strengthening of the civil society sector is not the focus or goal of Don Bosco, many of their interventions do have an impact in the way the local population thinks, behaves, and approaches their current reality.

This chapter starts summarizing the three main projects that the NGO operates. It continues with two subsections as the main contribution to the locals. Specific interventions are described under each section, providing evidence from the field and organized as follows: first the accounts of international NGO staff, followed by local staff contributions, followed by program participants insights, followed by community members opinions and finalizing with my personal observations.

As not all of the groups mentioned above commented on each of the themes and subthemes, and some accounts are longer than others. However the order of the information available per topic follows the previously described sequence and the source will be always identified in the text. I finish the chapter with a conclusion on the main NGO interventions in the area of education that have an impact with the development of the local civil society sector and their links with some literature on the topic.

Their vision is a peaceful and developed Cambodia where poor youth receive quality education, moral and spiritual values are upheld, and women play active roles in decision making and nation building initiatives. They accomplish this through their work by inspiring hope, nurturing life, promoting human dignity, delivering integral education for poor youth (especially girls) and empowering to become active, honest citizens.

The community of Tuol Kork is in charge of the Don Bosco Primary School in Punh Chreh, the Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre for Young Women, and a boarding home for teenage girls at risk. Punh Chreh is a very poor neighbourhood in the outskirts of Phnom Penh. Don Bosco School runs two kindergarten classes, and one class of each primary grade from one to six. The school follows the MoEYS curriculum and supplements it with extra classes such as English language, computer and values class. It is very impressive to see such a well built three stories fenced school, painted, with steel sheet covered playgrounds, well maintained facilities in the middle of such a poor neighbourhood with oxen walking around the non-paved streets and wooden houses on stilts surrounded by garbage everywhere.

The school hours are from 7:30am to 3:30pm. It starts with honours to the flag and anthem singing, followed by the “good morning talk” given by any of the sisters or teachers. In the middle of the morning, kindergarten students receive a cup of soy milk and after drinking it they wash their cup and go back to class. At 11:30pm both kindergarten and elementary school children receive lunch, which is usually a bowl of vegetable soup with rice and some meat. For many of the children, that is their only meal every day, and it is touching to see how sometimes very small children line up two or three times to receive extra helpings. After the lunch, each child washes their dish and play while the cleaning delegation in charge sweeps the floor. After the second part of the day, the children gather in

the ground for honouring the flag again which is taken down with the most respect and most of the students go home then, while the cleaning delegation sweeps not only the ground where lunch has been eaten, but all the grounds and classrooms. They are also responsible for the gardens. The school employs no janitors or gardeners, only a cook and two guards in addition to the teachers, secretary and general assistant.

Although the fixed school fee is of \$5 dollars per month, only two families pay the full amount and the rest pay what they can. Many families pay nothing. The school gives preference of admission to the poorest children, and provides them with high quality education, school supplies, uniforms, and daily lunch. Many families receive additional financial help from the VIDES (Voluntariato Internazionale Donna Educazione Sviluppo, INGO that supports education for disadvantaged women and youth) scholarship program. It is important to highlight that the teachers are fairly paid and all of them deeply committed to the work they perform. The kindergarten and vocational training centre at Tuol Kork follow quite the same day structure as in Punh Chreh, except for the fact that the children and young women do not receive any meals. The vocational training centre has four classes: two classes each at year one and year two for the technical career of secretarial studies.

The boarding house started in 1996 with two orphans that the sisters agreed to take under their care until they finished high school. Currently there are 22 interns who attend either the Public High School or the Methodist High School, both in the neighbourhood. Most of these girls are orphans, from broken families, or “at risk” (physical and/or psychological violence, prostitution, abuse, etc) situation. Usually either a sister or a priest would have visited their homes before referring them with the Salesian Community. There are also some Catholic girls from the provinces who want to continue their high school studies in the capital and by housing them, the sisters can foster their spiritual life, which

would otherwise be quite difficult in the countryside due to the small presence of the Catholic Church outside the main urban settings. By living with the sisters, the girls are ensured a safe environment, close follow up in all the areas of their development by the sisters, high school education, as well as board and meals. They also receive a wide range of non-formal education.

Alumni, or “past students” as called by the Sisters, are also closely monitored. They form an alumni association and meet approximately once a month, with a yearly overnight gathering where formation and networking blend with the excitement of reuniting with old good friends. For some alumni members this is the only time to re-connect with their Alma Matter, for others it is one of many, as there are former students who stay in contact with the Sisters and their former school through the scholarship program mainly, where they meet the sisters once a month to receive the money that international sponsors send them to continue their studies.

Don Bosco Contributions to the Development of the Local Civil Society Sector

It is the Salesian Sisters belief that the students who are educated through their programs and schools are meant to be hope for the country’s future. Such a future is unfolding uncertain for the Cambodians who are in transitional times. The sisters, aware of these changes, do their best in providing an education that will fit the demands of the current situation for their students in order for such education to have an impact at large scale. This section highlights the two main Salesian contributions through the educational programs they provide in terms of civil society development at the grassroots level and their efforts to bridge the traditional Cambodian ways of living with the demands of modernity.

One contribution is the holistic approach to education referring to the programs that the Salesians run while paying attention to the intellectual, social, spiritual, and emotional aspects of each student. Detailed practices on how the educational programs address each of these areas and how such interventions contribute to the acculturation process at the local level are described under this theme. The second contribution is the moral values education, and the section also details its processes, outcomes and limitations, as well as impact in the Cambodian social and civil development. One of the main characteristics to highlight about the Salesians Sisters of Don Bosco, also described in this chapter, is the importance and priority that they give to women and children, especially the most disadvantaged ones.

Holistic Education

Education for the Salesian family is not only centred on learning academic knowledge, as an international staff member explained:

Cultivating all areas of the person: the physical, spiritual, social and well yes, of course the intellectual too, which is the most recognized here, but in the most balance possible all of them (S1-1)

This section describes the main areas where the sisters focus the education they provide as well as the interventions they use, their outcomes and challenges.

High quality academic education

The quality of education in a country where the 44% of the girls drop off elementary school (World Bank, 2009) is important business for the sisters of Don Bosco. The emphasis on a high quality academic education during the early years has its rewards when the students are left to continue their way outside the guidance of the organization. One

international staff member commented that the alumni of the elementary school in Punh Chreh are more likely to continue with secondary education than alumni from the other schools in the zone and she attributed so to the high quality education the students are provided with during the six years of elementary at Don Bosco school. Another international staff member described some of the factors that make Don Bosco School at Punh Chreh a good option for the local children to receive their basic education :

They [the students] are well fed, they have good resources and infrastructure. We teach them the MoEYS curriculum and complement with other subject such as English and Computer class (sic) that we know will be useful for them in their future. They learn to like school so they are self motivated to continue when they finish sixth grade (S2-2).

For the local staff, the main benefit that the students at Don receive is the high quality education. At the Punh Chreh elementary school, all the teachers and administrative staff interviewed agreed that the children need education to land good jobs and to become good citizens. One teacher assured me that the quality of curriculum contents is the highest and that all her students are usually eager to know more and not only that, but to go home and share with their families what they learned at school (T2-6). Another teacher confirmed the extended impact that the education they provide has outside the school walls in terms of values:

It is very good for children to learn this [moral values] at school because you know, their parents are so poor, they only repeat what they saw when they grew up and back in the days it was probably not very nice. But nobody taught them any other way because they were so busy trying to survive. These children learn the good ways at school and then they take them home. There is this mother of one of my students, who

always asks her 7 year old what he learned at school every day so she can learn too.

Then you realize it is not only the children we are educating, it is the whole families sometimes and our hope is that as families learn the good ways too, they will start practicing them little by little and the community relationships improve. Yes, like a chain of goodness (T2-3).

Given the fact that the students at Punh Chreh elementary school were too young to be interviewed, during one recess period I made an informal verbal survey about the things they liked the most about school while sitting on the floor with a group of them around (and a teacher at my side who would translate). The majority of students, who were in second and third grade, mentioned to see their friends, to learn mathematics, and to become wiser. One mentioned that school helped him to be a better person without providing more details, and another one that school was much better than being working in the fields transplanting rice.

When asked to suggest anything that they would change about their school, a few mentioned longer mathematic classes, school on Saturdays as well, more recess time, and more of their cousins attending the same school. My last question was about their expectations about school. One mentioned that she wants to be a school teacher when she grows up and for that she knew had to do very well at her classes. Several others mentioned the ability that school would provide to them to get good jobs when they grow up so they could make money and help their families. A few others went less far and said that elementary school would allow them the chance to go to secondary school and if they worked hard, they would be the smartest in the class. It can be concluded from these answers is that at this very young age, the children are already aware of the value of education in their future lives and self motivated to make the most of it. They also have a sense that education has an impact not only in their personal lives but in the ones surrounding them.

At the school, the students are provided with school supplies and uniforms to emphasize equity at school. The facilities, although nothing fancy, are well equipped with the basics to learn and a few extras. The computer room was set up with support from a Singaporean group that had adopted the school as their direct beneficiaries, it has computers for each child with basic programs, and it is where the teachers also learn technological skills on Saturday mornings. The music room has a variety of instruments for each child such as wind-keyboards, recorders, bells, castanets, triangles, and xylophones. A journal entry reads as follows:

The Christmas festival is coming soon and the children are practicing the festival songs: Deck the Halls and Silent Night among others. There was the blackboard with the notes written in the music room and all the children, regardless of which instrument they were playing, knew the position and time to play. And I am writing about small children from 2nd and 3rd grade who look 3 years younger than how they really are because they are so small. Every time the teacher would start playing the piano, she would call the notes out loud: Re, Mi, La, Reeeeeee, Mi, La... for the children to follow her. I asked one of the international staff if Cambodia had any tradition in instrumental music and she explained to me that traditional Khmer music is very different, more based on percussions and strings. However the fact that the children learn to read and play music develops in them mental abilities, as well as other 'hidden curriculum goals' as she called them, such as the concepts of harmony, teamwork, patience, perseverance, attention, concentration and the consideration of arts as a form of expression.

For the young women at the vocational training centre, the academic program has three components: general education, skills training and values education. The general education

includes topics such as Khmer culture, general office procedures, as well as health and hygiene. The skills branch includes English Language, Accounting and Computer classes, and the Values component includes Values class, personality development and some other extra-curricular activities. Two months before graduation the students have a two-months long internship, and it is reported by the staff member in charge of the program as well as some members of the Alumni Association, that a high percentage of graduates are hired by the companies who employed them as interns. The integration of these three components is important for the young ladies because the government-sponsored education system is of very low quality, so even though all the applicants acquired their high school certifications, it does not mean that they are well prepared (S2-1).

One of the vocational training centre students identified both the acquired social and technical skills that would prepare them for the workplace as the main benefit of their education at Don Bosco. One of the second year students at the training centre, commented that during the year and a half that she has been at Don Bosco she has learned basics of accounting and office management that would make her a potential employee for any of the companies in Phnom Penh who require well trained staff.

The interns' academic education is provided by the public or Methodist High Schools and is complemented at the boarding home with private tutoring or other modalities of non-formal education in the areas that the girls need the most support in. An international staff member explains:

We know that having a degree is very important, so we do everything possible for them to have one, that is why they go to the high schools. But we are also aware that it is not enough because degrees here can be easily bought with money, so they not always mean something. Here in the house we try to fill those deficiencies (S2-3).

In order to meet those deficiencies they utilize all the resources available including volunteers for private tutoring sessions, external English classes, exchanges with other youth groups, personal development days, and after school activities which, to the Salesians, are part of teaching the girls about finding creative solutions, about enriching from diversity, and about sharing their gifts as others do with them.

Developing social and interpersonal skills

To complement and reinforce the contents learned at school, the Salesians facilitate several extra-curricular activities such as sport tournaments, seasonal festivals, home visits, and students' committees. An international staff member explained in this regard:

All these initiatives, we organize to improve the relationships among the students, link them with their community, teach them to work together and involve them in the basics of civil participation (S2-1)

A number of student committees are promoted at Don Bosco at all levels for the students to be active in the organization and collaboration of their school's maintenance. At the Elementary school, there are student committees who clean the premises after lunch and after each school day. They also take care of the gardens and the school compound. The young women at the vocational training centre do the same, or volunteer to watch over kindergarten children in Tuol Kork during nap time, or tutor the interns. The interns also have the chance to be English volunteer teachers on Sundays and they have routines to contribute to the community they live in, such as cleaning and cooking schedules. One of the sisters working in primary school commented on the behaviour impact these activities have in the students:

Community members like our school very much because they see children behaving differently here [at Don Bosco School], and they want their children and neighbours to come to our school too (S2-4).

When asked about the meaning of “behaving differently” the staff member primarily mentioned attitudes such as the children being respectful with their parents, use their time productively, like to study, helping with house chores and improving their hygiene among others. I heard a 5th grade student say that he wanted to change his country by changing his family first. Those are high expectations for a 5th grader. Still I am sure that thought came out by a combination of good morning talks, values class, and an awareness of his family situation.

The small groups and committees the Salesian participants build, in addition to reinforce values and attitudes, also promote good relationships among the participants. It was not unusual to observe the 6th graders after school sweeping the floor and talking among each other about the latest news. I was able to also observe the boarders while spending time with them, dressing up for performances or practicing new dances. They are playful among themselves, joke together, and help each other. One night that I accompanied them to a presentation and they were always looking after each other, asking me the location of someone who was momentarily out of sight and sharing the resources that for one reason or another were not enough for all of them. This is especially significant among Khmer and Vietnamese girls. Once they live, study and work together, both groups learn to respect each other first, then to accept each other, and usually to see each other aside their cultural background as young women with similar aspirations, lives and hopes. This is a very difficult task and it takes enormous amounts of time and patience. Still the results are amazing, because they eventually learn to accept and appreciate each other, and behave as

the adoptive family that they are. This is a good first step for social integration and inclusion in Cambodia.

Another group of participants are the Don Bosco alumni whom I met during their annual sleep-over retreat. They arrived at the Teuk Thla grounds where they immediately starting talking among themselves, happy to catch up on their lives. As I started to know them one by one, I conducted interviews and casual conversations. One expressed with very good English what other young women also recognized as one of the strengths of Don Bosco Training Centre:

We not only learn skills for our jobs but also how to live. Before I did not make good use of my time. With the sisters I learned to be honest, respectful, loving, and to trust others. But not anybody, just the ones I know that are at least trying to be honest too (F2-1).

A different former student emphasized the social aspect of the education she received:

Here [at Don Bosco] I learned to not be afraid of people, now I have good conversations with everybody at my work and I am not intimidated by others. People tell me their problems and I try to help them. When I don't know what to say I bring out aspects of Khmer culture that I learned at school and everybody [in the workplace] comments on them, we all have a very good time talking in my workplace (F2-3).

This comment caught my attention because Cambodians are not particularly talkative people, in part culturally, and in part because of the traumatic experience during the Khmer Rouge where the survivors learned that the only way to survive was to be silent and passed such behavioural patterns to their children. The training the sisters are providing to their young students is also slowly spreading the basis for good social interactions outside the

school compound. A clear examples is the young lady mentioned above who encourages good communication and healthy relationships in their workplace.

It is possible to appreciate that the first reaction of the former pupils on the benefits of having studied at Don Bosco is in the line of life and social skills. Although they acknowledge the importance of work-related skills which is the main goal of a vocational training centre, they also consider the value of character and social formation as one of the highlights of Don Bosco.

While visiting the MoEYS office in Phnom Penh, I was able to interview a Ministry representative who spoke English about his experience working with the different Don Bosco missions. He acknowledged the Salesian centres and mentioned that if the Director of Education in Phnom Penh did not visit them as often as he should, is because everybody [at the Ministry's office] knows that they function very well. He even mentioned that a few employees at the Ministry or their close familiars are alumni from one or another Salesian centre. The man also commented on the work the NGO performs in trying to bridge old and new practices through their educational programs:

Before, Cambodia was isolated from the world, and the traditional mentality was ok back in the days. Now it is open to the world. We have foreign investment, tourism, and media from all Asia and the world, although you probably have seen mostly Thai influence here. Still, some of our old traditional ways are obsolete already to this new trend. It is unfortunate that some of those ways will be lost, since they are part of being Khmer, but that is the expense of becoming part of the world. We don't want to be like Myanmar. We are now part of ASEAN and I know that the students at Don Bosco learn to have that open mentality that will help them to educate other Cambodians about the new Cambodia we are reconstructing (G2-1).

Although not mentioned in the interviews, I was able to observe that the Salesians encourage critical thinking at all levels in all settings. A journal entry reads as follows:

Yesterday there were no classes because it was remembered the day that the Vietnamese 'liberated' Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge. Some youth were invited to go and parade to the Phnom Penh Stadium under the promise of a lunch and a few riels for transportation by the government. I asked any of the girls from the vocational training if they went and all of them answered negatively. One of the teachers passing by joined the conversation. She asked the girls if they thought that was a good approach by the government [to invite youth to parade offering lunch and a stipend]. Their first answer was a shy smile with no words. The teacher insisted when one finally answered that most of the youth going were not born yet when all the liberation happened, so they probably do not know what it is about. Another complemented the answer saying that they probably only went for the free lunch promise without knowing what was all about. The teacher asked if they knew what was the whole thing about and one said that although one of them asked at her home, her aunt, who survived the liberation, doesn't like to talk about it, it is too painful for her. Another girl mentioned that she read in the newspaper what was it about and the teacher asked if she believed what the newspaper said. The girl seemed surprised with the teacher's question and the teacher left after congratulating the young woman for reading the newspaper and inviting her to think two times from that yesterday on after each newspaper article she read.

This kind of scenes were not uncommon in all the Salesian venues, in all sorts of circumstances and either if the people involved was aware or not.

Involving the community through an inter-sectorial approach

It is widely recognized by scholars and fieldworkers that in the current world, education is not a job only of the teacher anymore, or only the school's responsibility. Close collaboration between families, community organizations and government are necessary for the best outcomes in terms of high quality education for the new generation.

It is more difficult to involve the geographical community in a city as Phnom Penh because of size and lifestyle, as it would be in a rural village or smaller city where houses are closer geographically and families know each other. Still, the families are the first members of the community that the Don Bosco schools target, as the direct link and influence on the children. In the schools, there are parents meetings five times a year, where parents are updated about their children school performance, and also exposed to parenting classes in topics such as improving relationships among parents and children, supporting the children's development at home, family communication, and values among others (S2-4). These meetings provide a chance for the parents to meet among themselves and be exposed to the opportunity of sharing their common role in a safe environment. At the vocational training centre, the parents meet once a term with the same objectives.

In terms of interactions with other community organizations, specifically in the non-governmental sector, NGO staff acknowledge the importance of a multi-sectorial approach for an effective functioning of the civil society sector. Don Bosco and other organizations work collaboratively by referring people to each other depending of the nature of the need. Many of the interns they house or students they admit are sent by organizations such as Maryknoll, Children's Fund, Mekong Children, Holly Baby, Missionaries of Charity, among others, which have first-hand knowledge of family situations and have knowledge of

the benefit that Don Bosco would provide to those girls. In the same way, the books produced by Don Bosco on typing, values and technology education are widely used by other organizations for their own purposes.

We at Don Bosco rely on other NGOs for issues related to health, family topics, resources, housing, or educational needs that are out of our area of expertise, another example is the high school education facilities for the interns. Relationships should be of mutual collaboration because we all are here for the same, it is like a network of support (S2-3).

Don Bosco Foundation is a member of the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) which is a network of NGOs working in Cambodia in the educational field, and also is member of the ECCE sub-group that was described in Chapter 4 - New Humanity. Still, it is not easy to work with individuals from different places or origin and different customs. This circle of support is important for each of these organizations because they are aware that they are not alone in their work. However, the professional competence among NGOs is somehow evident, and although the importance of working together towards common goals is widely recognized when it comes to working together, many organizations exert more effort to succeed .

Although Don Bosco works closely with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, their relationship is good but not close. As the Ministry of Education official curriculum is followed, and the vocational training centre for young girls is considered to be a model for vocational training centres Cambodia, the relationship is mostly supportive, especially with the Director of Schools of Phnom Penh (S2-1). The vocational training centre has also worked in partnership with the government by developing the first curriculum for vocational training education and books. Since the early

1990s, many other contributors have been involved, these books and sections of the curriculum are still in use today, mainly by different NGOs.

Leveraging human resources

Teachers and local staff are highly valued by the Salesians and considered an equal partner in the programs' success. One of the international staff member commented that although the attention is centered in the students, Don Bosco teachers and local staff are very valuable for the organization's mission and therefore is a priority to train them and follow up closely to their needs:

We pay them a fair salary because we value their work, and we know that for focusing in it, they should not be financially worried or having to work second jobs, or what is worse and sadly the norm in Cambodian schools, to find ways of get extra cash from the students, either selling marks, photocopies with study guides, or charging for particular tutoring classes (S2-2).

Working conditions are also a highlight of teaching for Don Bosco, because they feel valued and part of a close community with the goal of contributing with Don Bosco's mission to accomplish the EFA (Education For All) goal of education for all. The teachers recognize the sisters' efforts to promote good relationships and similar "family-like" environment within the staff to the one present among the students at the vocational training centre. One of the teachers commented on the communication dynamics among the staff and sisters: The sisters are always open to suggestions from us and encourage us to be creative and innovative. We are not afraid to talk with them, they are very friendly" (T2-1).

She continued citing examples of how the teachers were empowered by being valued and taken in account as important human resources for the school

In a public school a teacher would never be able to suggest anything to the principals because that would be defying his position and making him/her loose face. The sisters here are always open to our suggestions and ideas and most of the times they support us to perform them (T2-4).

Teachers are expected to closely monitor their students' academic development, to instruct them in the moral values, and also to preach by example. The teachers are proactive instead of reactive as is the Cambodian cultural rule, and very committed to their jobs, as they believe they are making a positive difference in their students' lives, the community and their country, demonstrated in the quotes above. They work very closely with the sisters in organizing activities school and non-school related, such as parents meetings, campaigns, festivals, sports tournaments, volunteer groups.

It is obvious by observing them interact among their peers and the children, by seeing the care they put in their work to deliver their best performance, and how they exceed expectations for contributing with the school's goals that the teachers feel all comfortable in their jobs, among their peers, and believe that they are valued and always encouraged to develop professionally. Their opinion on any topic related to the school development or the children is carefully heard and considered by the sisters, a procedural novelty that breaks with the hierarchical structure of the Cambodian society. At Don Bosco schools, the sharing of ideas for the benefit of the community is recognized and encouraged. This attitude was criticized by a principal of a public school when interviewing him for the New Humanity section. He suggested that it was his job to think in ways to improve the school, and the teachers' job was to teach the curriculum. One journal entry reads as follows:

Today I noticed that the teachers have a voice in this school [Punh Chreh]. One of the sisters was planning how to decorate the school ground for the festival. She suggested

a couple of ideas, when one of the teachers came out with other ideas. The sister listened to what the teacher had to say and agreed with her asking if she wouldn't mind taking charge of it and if she had any needs for material to let her know. At the end of the meeting another teacher came closer to the one with the idea and offered help to take on the task.

Another entry about local staff proactiveness reads as follows:

In the morning, the sisters in charge of the VIDES Cambodia communities in Toul Kork and I went to Punh Chreh to meet with the teachers and women who are part of the group there. I was expecting that the sister was going to provide them with a list of activities that were needed for the regional meeting next Saturday, and gathering ideas for their contribution. When we arrived the group of women already had a song to introduce their group, a power point presentation with the activities that they carry on pictures included and the spokesperson for the Khmer and English presentations! On our way back I commented on it with the sister who said to me something like: 'Oh yes, these girls [the teachers] are wonderful, they are so enthusiastic and truly committed to their work either in the school or at the service of the community'.

In a country where the formal educational system is still focused on rote learning, a holistic approach to education has two functions. One is to help the beneficiaries to learn about themselves, their capabilities, their limitations, and their potential in order to place themselves within their reality and be agents of change within their circles. A second function is more at the macro level, where a holistic education bridges the local curriculum with the demands of a global knowledge economy. By teaching Ministry approved classes the NGO conveys with the local practices and transmits traditional values. By complementing their education with classes such as English, IT (Information Technology),

or values, they raise the students' consciousness and develop their abilities to evolve in this transition time for the country without losing their identity.

Values Education

While speaking with a Buddhist monk in the city of Battambang, he expressed deep sorrow for the loss of values in the Cambodian society after the war years, and emphasized the hard work of the monks in teaching the Cambodian people the "good ways". The monk was not alone in his concern. The sisters are equally aware of the social challenges that the years of war and political instability have left as a result in the local people. They, in the same way as their Buddhist colleagues, do their best efforts to teach "the good ways". The teaching and reinforcement of moral values is another branch of the contents that the Salesians address in their holistic education model. However, it is considered as a whole different section in this chapter, given the fact that it represents the focus with highest priority in Don Bosco education. Examples of values education in the Salesian context are found in formal and non formal modalities, and are reinforced through experiential learning activities that will be described with more detail in the following paragraphs.

The value of the person

One international staff member spoke of the values and character formation Don Bosco provides their students as the area of education that leaves the most transcendental mark on the students.:

Our values program emphasizes the value of life, the value of each person. We want to build up persons and communities, for that it is important to build first confidence in the students, confidence and self-esteem, which together with trust, are values lost

in Cambodia. Trust in self and in others, you cannot give what you don't have. Then we go to the group dynamics, but definitely the value of life in such a violent society is a highlight, we are surrounded by violence: the government, within the families, there is stealing, human trafficking, no, no, no... Even if they [the students] did not learn much of the technical contents, if they learn this [values and moral guidelines], their life will be better in all senses (S1-1).

At the vocational training centre, explained an international staff member, the girls follow a values program developed by the sisters called "Life and Right Living" and it is usually taught by a sister who complements the program with the current news happening or calendar seasons. Complementing the curricular values education, there are several activities that reinforce the values that the sisters want to plant in their students. Before the class day starts, the sisters and teachers consult the "good morning talk schedule" which presents the value of the month, the idea to talk about on that particular day, and the person in charge.

The students gather by the flag pole and with two of them leading, they sing the anthem as the flag raises, highlighting the national pride and respect for patriotic symbols. Nobody is shy. The voices of the elementary school and kindergarten children, because they sing under a steel sheet roof which covers the playground, can be heard blocks away. The young ladies from the vocational training sing like a wonderfully trained choir all at one voice very well tuned. Next, the official greeting takes place. The children say: "Good morning sister, good morning teachers" in Khmer, and the young ladies "Good morning sister, good morning teachers, good morning classmates" in English. Then the good morning talk takes place and everybody listens carefully. There is no child distracted with the person sitting next or playing with their fingers. No young woman is doing her hair or finishing the homework. The teachers and sisters prepare their performance very well. They

use symbols and make relationships and connections to the students' everyday lives. A journal entry reads as follows:

Today the day at Punh Chreh started as usual with the assembly, national anthem and rising of the flag. Then a teacher started talking about the value of teamwork. She started asking a few children what could they do with a banana alone [bananas is one of the most common fruits in Cambodia]. The answers were to eat it, fry it and sell it, and to give it to somebody else. She asked how many people would be happy with a single banana and the answers were one, two or maximum three as a snack. Then she asked what would she be able to do with a bunch of bananas. She took at least 15 answers such as spraying them gold and silver for a wedding decoration, offering them to the monks, making them banana chips and sell them at the market, cook them with rice and feed a family for many days, exchange them for other goods, among others. By this point I could see little eyes realizing what the message of the anecdote was. The teacher finished asking who would benefit from a bunch of bananas and many answers came in place as well, including the ancestors' spirits who would receive the prayers from the monks who receive the bananas as offering. The teacher summarized the good morning talk inviting the children to work together among themselves and in their homes because many heads always have more and better ideas than only one. She invited them to build good relationships the same way all the bananas in the bunch had their place in a row in order to spread their talents with many people around them.

Good night talks are a regular practice every night with the interns, before bedtime arrives. A sister gathers them and talks to them for about 15-20 minutes, encouraging introspection about the positive and negative experiences during their day, the way they reacted, as well as their plans and expectations for the following day. This introspection is

important, according to the sisters, to interiorize the new learning experiences the girls are exposed to. It allows them to draw connections between what the staff at Don Bosco teaches them and the way the everyday life unfolds, and making value judgements about what is right, what is wrong and which way they choose. Another international staff member also commented on this practice:

Some former students come and tell us that at their homes they give good morning or good night talks to their children everyday too because they realize what an important impact they have (S2-6).

The value of women

Although the situation of women in Cambodia is not as precarious as in other regions of Asia, it is far from equal. Families usually favour male children to go to school, especially in the poor circles where the non-official fees for teachers, uniforms, supplies, private tutoring classes, and commute might play an important role in a family decision about which child to send to school. Boys are usually favoured. One of the Salesian sisters' missions and vision focuses is the empowerment of women through education. Empowerment, in the words of an international NGO staff member, is "to make them aware of the power they have within" (S2-7).

One international staff member explained that the Salesians of Don Bosco respect the Cambodian culture and do not want to impose foreigner behaviours on the local people. However, through their educational programs, they advocate for the universal human rights and one of those rights is dignity for the women, a right not always recognized in Cambodian culture (S2-7). Another NGO international staff described the social expectations of women and resistance to change:

You see, there is the 'Chabap-srei', have you heard about it? It is a behaviour code for girls: they should be gentle, her feet like that, etc. But there is no code for boys. Girls are afraid of being different. We teach them that as long as it is good there is nothing to be shy about being different (S2-1).

This idea was complemented by other staff member contribution:

It is very important for us to educate them [the female students] because they are the new generation. We think that women bring a very important touch despite the society not believing in them very much. We have 16 years here and our former students are members of parliament and usually leaders wherever they work. We educate them as women who will govern the nation and lead it forward, showing who they are and what they can achieve (S2-3).

Another international staff member spoke about the spiritual life of each girl, as a path of self-discovery. This topic is important because most of the student body is Buddhist and the sisters, a Catholic congregation, is providing education under the Catholic ideology and mission. She summarized that the spirituality they promote is not about converting anybody at any point, but rooted in teaching the students to be righteous women in their homes and workplaces that will lead their country with a high moral focused in the human beings as the most important, which is a common teaching in both Buddhism and Christianity (S2-3).

She described the way in which the girls are exposed to both religious traditions, one by the NGO, the other one by their families and social environment and it is in them the task to choose, for many of them, being it the first thing they choose about their lives ever.

One teacher from the vocational training centre expressed that for empowerment to be successful, deep personal monitoring of each student's necessary:

It is very important for us to teach the girls first about their person, because if you don't know what you have, you don't know what is there to offer to others. In order to achieve this task, we relay in the curriculum subjects such as personality and values, and also by being a good example to them, and by presenting good role models for them to follow (T2-5).

As a result of the emphasis that Don Bosco staff in leveraging the value of the women they attend, a visible change of behaviour between the first and second year female students in the vocational training centre is appreciable. One of the vocational training centre teachers commented that the change of behaviour is mostly in the way they treat themselves, the hunger for knowledge they have, and their desire to educate themselves more and grow as persons (T2-5). One former student spoke of such evolution in her own experience:

Coming to Don Bosco was the best thing I could have done. Before, in my life, I would go around with friends. After, I have learned to make good use of my time. I have learned to relate to other people and to get interested in knowing others. Meeting others is very important. Before I would not even enter a big building. Now I am not afraid anymore (F2-3).

The first year girls are very shy, tend to be by themselves or in pairs at the lunch time, their grades are lower, and in general are more reactive towards the school activities. The second year girls enjoy being in groups and talk among themselves. They tend to be less shy, are more self-motivated in terms of their studies and initiatives to improve their lives. They tend to be also more active and participative in the school activities. This evolution might be due to the fact that they feel safe in the school's environment and valued as the persons they are regardless of their sex, socio-economical position, or family relationships. Some students are aware of these changes within, and some others might not yet be. Still as

they discover themselves, they discover at the same time their own potential to transform their reality and contribute to the development of their country.

The value of others

One international staff member commented on the social aspect of the values program efforts as one of their main contributions:

In terms of civil society building, or just regular life skills, we teach them to work in teams to diminish the tendency to individualism that is characteristic in the Cambodian society. We also encourage them to be volunteer teachers either in the villages on Sunday, or with the intern girls (S2-1).

In a culture of general individualism, where mistrust is one of the major obstacles to building the local civil society sector, Don Bosco Foundation strives to promote values and good relationships as a first step towards civil engagement. Following the learning that is acquired both formally and informally through the educational programs, with opportunities to practice it, in direct benefit of the community is another step. The Salesians Sisters of Don Bosco facilitate these types of opportunities as much as possible, one example is their membership with VIDES.

VIDES (Voluntariato Internazionale Donna Educazione Sviluppo) is an international NGO run by the same Salesian Sisters congregation with the objectives of promoting volunteerism, distance support through scholarship and advocacy for women and children. It has the same foundations and mission as the Don Bosco centres in Cambodia and in all countries where the Salesian sisters have missions, but what characterizes VIDES is its international scope. VIDES encourages educational and social activities that will promote voluntary service for the protection of human rights, mainly for women and children. They

have presence in many parts of the world, and the Don Bosco communities in Cambodia constitute an entire chapter themselves. Through them, the main activities are to develop local voluntarily groups of women concerned and committed with their communities.

The VIDES group at Punh Chreh is primarily formed by current and former school teachers and other community members. They are an active group fundraising with the objective to sponsor the educational costs of poor students (currently sponsoring one high school student), visiting the homes of children at risk to find alternatives together with the families, teaching English classes, supporting the sisters' educational extra-curricular initiatives, and developing income-generating projects (soap-making and the pig bank). All these activities are managed by the VIDES Cambodia members in a voluntarily basis. This is a quite novelty for a country where every hour of the day represent 60 minutes of potential income generation that can be the difference between one or two plates of rice per day. One of the teachers involved in the initiative described their work at Punh Chreh:

The teachers at Punh Chreh are involved in community activities such as the sponsorship of poor students, there is one we are helping to continue his high school students, also, helping the sisters in achieving the Education for All goals at the school as teachers, visiting the homes of children at risk, there is the project of making soap to sell and the pig bank, although the pig bank has not been very successful lately, sometimes it is, sometimes not so much (T2-1).

The VIDES group at Tuol Kork, formed by many vocational training students and some interns, on Sunday mornings goes to poor communities in Phnom Penh or rural disadvantaged villages in the provinces of Kandal and Kompong Speu to teach English. The girls with less skills teach the lower grades, including kindergarten children, with learning basic skills: the alphabet or the numbers. The higher skilled volunteers teach higher grades.

Many of the Don Bosco students who are volunteer teachers in poor communities, expressed very highly of such activity, mentioning several benefits in different areas that the initiative contributed to their lives. The following table shows the main motivations of the volunteer teachers for doing such work from a sample of 41 interviews.

Table 7. Motivations of Don Bosco students to volunteer teaching English on Sundays

Motivation	Number of respondents out of 41
I help the less advantaged	23
I gain experience and/or learn from them [villagers]	23
I like to share my experience and/or knowledge and/or love	21
It makes me feel happy / good	14
It helps towards the community / country development	7
It teaches the students the importance to build good relationships among themselves	6
It improves my relationships with the community members and my friends I work with	5
It will be useful for the students in the future	5

One of those volunteers commented on the impact their work had on the local communities they attended in their effort to replicate the holistic approach to education that they received at Don Bosco:

I can help children who are so far from school to develop themselves and that will contribute to developing the community and the country. But we don't just give them help, we teach them how to help themselves. With English language, they will be able to get better jobs and do more things with their lives if they want (Y2-3).

Another one described her role as coordinator, ensuring the teams of teachers are complete, managing the relationships with the principal of the school, and collecting the materials they provide such as brooms and toys. She commented: “All these activities are good because maybe one day I want to become a NGO worker and will have experience coordinating groups dedicated to community services” (Y2-1).

By observing the girls prepare their classes and their delivery methods, it is possible to appreciate that the learning experience goes beyond the little English the students in poor communities learn. The volunteers develop leadership skills which is evident in how they organize their classes among themselves. They become more confident, which is visible in both new and experienced teachers. The students, their families and the community respect the volunteers because they know that they are doing it out of personal interest, emphasizing the importance of the people, and the poor in particular, above the value of money or any other material reward. One of the volunteer teachers explained to me that she had this young man from the 6th grade class who would ask her often why would she come to teach them for free instead of being teaching somewhere else for money, and that she would answer it was because she enjoyed being with them and this is the same way she had learned English from the sisters, and now she wants to share that gift with others. She concluded saying: “It is good karma”

However, they teach not only English but also hygiene practices, attitudes, and the human values that they had learned from their time at Don Bosco School. Teaching in pairs or small groups, depending on the size of the class, provides them with the opportunity to plan, work, manage the class, and evaluate together. The young women do everything with the support from the sisters, from contacting Village and Commune Authorities, to proposing initiatives, to presenting the idea, and asking for space and support from the

school principal. They also visit the students' homes to closely follow up with their families and become involved in the community. A journal entry describes a Sunday of accompanying the volunteer teachers to their venues:

Today at 6:30am while having breakfast I could see the young women already at the Tuol Kork community grounds carrying boxes with toys and brooms and loading them into the trucks that would take them to the communities where they teach English. We left at 7am and when I say we, I refer to at least 4 vans full of girls going to different provinces or communities. The vans and trucks are uncomfortable. They are seriously overcrowded and many of them open, so the dust would attack us quite often. However none of this inconveniences seemed to matter to the girls –who are used to travel by moto-, as they were singing all together and joking and talking about all sorts of things, sometimes very seriously, some others laughing and joking. The energy that in those trucks is very high. Everybody is happy, excited about a new day ahead, only one or two lost in their thoughts that would join the conversation or a song at some point.

After two hours and with the scarves quite dusty, we arrived in a small village in Kompong Speau province. The first thing visible is the big golden pagoda and right behind it a public school. The principal is already waiting with half of the children in the grounds, and the other half of students arrive within 5 minutes of the truck entering the compound. The young women in charge of the group greet the principal who is scrambling with the keys to open the classrooms and call for assembly. All the children align themselves in rows and listen to the good morning talk that one of the volunteer teachers prepared beforehand. They introduce a guest visiting that week and all the children sing a welcome song in Khmer and one in English. They are loud!

When the volunteer teacher dismisses them all of the students literally run to their classrooms and in three minutes time there is no sign of them anymore.

The three hours are short for a whole class about English language, health practices and good social relationships. The volunteer teachers teach in pairs and while one explains the lesson, the other is usually walking the sits providing personalized attention to the students. The coordinators walk the classrooms and distribute brooms and toys. There is a 15 minutes recess moment after an hour and a half of class and after another hour and a quarter of classes the session is finished. Some students stay behind sweeping the floor or playing with the toys that the girls brought with them.

On the way back to Tuol Kork the girls are quite tired. There are not so many songs or conversations anymore, but they all look satisfied. Some of them lay their heads on the legs of the person next to them, some others chat quietly or exchange insights about any school assignment due the next day. When arriving in Tuol Kork, all the girls from the different communities gather and eat lunch together before leaving for the rest of the afternoon.

The Don Bosco association with VIDES is just one example of the small groups or committees that the Salesians promote as a method of reinforcing what they teach in their different projects. They are also a mean for the students to learn to work together and get along despite ethnic differences, which in the case of Khmer and Vietnamese girls, is a major achievement. It was mentioned that the process of planning their activities, finding resources, and negotiating among themselves represents great informal education opportunity for the young women and it is the staff's job to only guide them in the task of identifying and highlighting each of their talents and contributions to the group, instead of their differences. Through all these activities, the moral values are promoted among the girls

and some acculturation patterns are already evident. A journal entry describes the attitudes of the girls who belong to the Apsara traditional dance group in a shift from a money-oriented priority to a solidarity-oriented priority:

The five girls who belong to the Apsara traditional dance group were requested to perform in a ceremony in Punh Chreh. I went with them because the performance was at night and they are too young and too beautiful to go on their own. Everybody was very pleased with the presentation and they received a big wad of bills as payment, a surprise for them compared to the usual 5 dollars each of them receive as a token of appreciation for their dances. The sister at home asked them what they were going to do with the money, leaving them the decision instead of her imposing one. I could see in the girls' faces how much they wanted to split it in equal parts and spend it in doing their hair, buying clothes, or going to visit their families, but at the end the group leader suggested to get each of them the usual 5 dollars. The rest would be split, a part to buy some accessories that the dancing group needed, such as hair pieces and make-up for the presentations, and another part to spend in general needs of the boarding home as needs arose. I was very touched by their decision. They thanked me for going with them and left to their rooms to help each other take off the dresses.

One last point worthy to mention in this section is the importance of the social environment that prevails at Don Bosco schools and the high regard the students have for it. One of the teachers at Punh Chreh elementary school described to me how it is priority for all the teachers to be available for anything the students might need, either academically, emotionally, or family related. Her rationale behind the statement was that many of the children live in poverty, or in broken families, where they obtain almost no support in their

growth. It is therefore important that the school provides such support as possible and that the students feel safe when they come to school in the mornings (T2-1).

At the vocational training centre, the friendliness that characterizes the centre is one of the highlights of attending Don Bosco for the students, making them feel comfortable and appreciated. More than two thirds of the second year students (out of a sample of 60) also mentioned the culture of support among them, either in academic or personal matters. One student referred to her school community: “They are like my family here” (P2-1).

A former student also commented on that aspect of her time while in Don Bosco:

They [the sisters] and the teachers were like my second family and my classmates like if I had many sisters because we all had such good relationship and loved and helped each other. The teachers and sisters teach us the good ways and give us advice, just as our mothers would do. Now I am very happy because the people around me think I am a good person. I feel proud of myself and I want to teach them the good ways too. I think the sisters would be happy to know. I want them to know that my years at Don Bosco are having impact beyond my person. I think that is why this former student meetings are good, we can share those experiences (F2-1).

The value of work ethic

It is also evident that the moral education that the students receive does not stop when class end and is left inside the school boundaries. It goes out with them and spreads in their families and in their workplaces. The Don Bosco alumni are widely recognized by the employer sector for their skills and also for their work ethic. Work ethic however, is not something the girls would learn as a subject, but everyday they have the subject called *Op-prum cheut* (literally, “education of the heart”) where they are taught values and character

formation. This knowledge is applied to their daily lives was what would then reflect as the strongly valued “work ethics” (Life and Right Living Textbook, 2005, pg.4). Given the fact that employers know that skills can be learned on the workplace if appropriate training is provided with the basic background, it is the competitive attitude, ability to work in a teamwork, and moral foundations that employers value the most when hiring. One international staff member commented on the vocational training program for hospitality and house management:

One of our biggest challenges is that we have a small kitchen to teach our students. They only learn the basics here, but it is the attitude that differentiates them when they get hired. The best employers in town always want our students, they call me to ask for graduates because they like the way they behave (S2-5).

Currently at the Centre, the two year values program is a part of their formation and are guidelines that can be applicable not only at the workplace, but in all other aspects of their lives: home, school, workplace, society, in the world. It starts with the understanding of life and its meaning, the principle that every human being has the value of dignity, and the appreciation for self and others. Once this is accomplished, the scope opens from the individual to others, many topics including living in harmony with oneself, with others, with the world, in freedom and responsibility (S2-1). These values are similar to those schools in Cambodia traditionally transmitted. It is an effort to overcome the damage the years of war and civil unrest left on the society and return to highlight the value of the person, the social collaboration and well being.

Conclusion

The education that the Salesian Sisters provide at Don Bosco introduces the concept that education is a vehicle to community development instead of the traditional end-use of it by the governing elite for self-legitimation. The education provided by Don Bosco at the kindergarten, elementary, or vocational training level in both formal and informal settings, defines the consideration of the person as a multi-dimensional being and their efforts to address each of those dimensions in the educational programs they run.

This multidimensional approach impacts the local community, both directly or indirectly, in the process of acculturation. The students experience a process of individual growth and discovery. Simultaneously they share it initially with their close school-based community, and then with the external community at a large. These interactions provide different outcomes and effects. When the students at Don Bosco identified the potential within, and exercise critical thinking to appreciate the reality that surrounds them, some transformation happens then, from the traditional pattern of Cambodian passivity to wait until others in higher hierarchy make decisions, to a more active attitude in identifying development gaps and addressing them.

The encouragement of good social relationships, of ethnical inclusiveness and the creation of small groups through diverse curricular and extra-curricular projects are also interventions that counter the mistrust and fear sowed by many years of war and civil unrest. A civil society sector can be considered strong and efficient when social relationships are strong and there is the opportunity for the identification of common values, the rise of local interests and the representation of minority groups in decision making (Blunkett, 2005; Finn & Malena, 2007; Van Rooy, 1998). It is therefore possible to infer that the education

provided at Don Bosco does contribute indirectly to the encouragement of civil associations at the grassroots level by promoting these experiential opportunities within their students. The idea that associations and collaborative work is beneficial for common interests begins within during the school years, and that diversity has the potential to enrich the group when their members are not discriminated.

By going beyond the individual, the promotion of student groups for community voluntary service portrays a representation of the civil society sector at the grassroots level that is intended to strengthen in the community and the country. There is a group of diverse individuals, who identified a need in the community towards the interest of the ones in most need, joined efforts, associated among themselves to develop an action plan, coordinated with the local leadership to tune details, and performed the service. Several outcomes have been generated from this initiative. One of most significant outcomes is the leverage of the human person as the main value of the services provided above economical remuneration. The leadership skills the young women acquire through the process, the professional development that they undergo through the experience, and the impact it has in the communities they serve are other sources of empowerment for the young women that provide a solid basis for a civil society to further develop.

It is by teaching with high academic standards, encouraging critical thinking, and valuing each person regardless of their ethnicity but for their potential contribution to a group, that the Salesian education builds the founding blocks for a civil society that will value people, that will create capacity for leadership within communities and that will reshape the balance of power in favour of greater social inclusion, justice, dignity, equality of opportunity and respect (Ball & Knight, 1999; Hayden, 1997)

CONCLUSION

Culture and Democracy

Culture has become a significant and widely acknowledged facet of development thinking in recent years. It has been recognized, especially during the past century, that cultural development influences local, national, and global power relations that shape projects or interventions. According to the theory of modernization, the globalized culture currently emerging is not a global culture in any utopian sense. It is not a culture that has arisen out of the mutual experiences and needs of all humanity. It does not draw equally on the world's diverse cultural traditions and it is not inclusive either. Rather, globalized culture is the world-wide installation of one particular culture born out of the one particular privileged historical experience. It is in short, the global extension of Western culture (Tomilson, 1999).

Regional cultures, especially in the post-conflict settings, or those of fragile states, face the influence, if not subtle imposition, of Western values in exchange for development aid from Western developed countries. One of this Western influences is the adoption of democracy as political system, and as an indicator of development. Starting from the definition of democracy as the political system where the people is conferred with the governance power through elected representatives, the civil society sector is one of its feature founding blocks. This sector is the one created by formal or informal associations of people, organized around shared values and interests (Un, 2006). It bridges the individual citizens with the government in terms of decision making and mutual support. In fragile and post-conflict countries however, the process of building or rebuilding a civil society sector is slow, full of challenges, and deeply influenced by local cultural and historical factors.

Therefore, building and rebuilding civil societies in fragile settings is a process of enculturation of the new generations and acculturation of the already existent communities into the democratic ideology and practices.

The case of Cambodia as a post-conflict emerging democracy

Cambodia is a South East Asian country which is enjoying peace after several decades of war and civil unrest. As a fragile post-conflict country, the civil society sector is very weak and slowly emerging at the grassroots level. This situation is in part due to cultural facts such as the lack of tradition in civic associations, power-sharing, diversity inclusion, and collaborative efforts for the common good. Some historical facts have also influenced the process, mainly in terms of the consequences of war, violence, and deep suffering evident in the lack of trust among people, resistance to make plans and take decisions, as well as a shift of values within the cultural behaviours, priorities, and practices.

Having accepted to adopt a democratic governance model in 1991 that came with the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, both the Cambodian government and nationals have had to learn about democracy, its philosophy, mode of operation, roles, and principles. Given the nature of such a big change from a very conservative hierarchical Asian culture to an open, globalized, Western-imposed democracy, and the fragility state in which the country was situated at the time, this transition has been slow and difficult. It has relayed in the assistance of international organizations and transnational civil society, who have adopted the role of mentors to the South East Asian country of 13 million.

In their work about global democracy, Archibugi (2009) & Brown & Timmer (2006) examined the role of the transnational civil society sector in engaging developing countries in norm creation, in promoting information politics, in spreading the democratic ideals, in

collective problem solving, and in the delivery of services. However the experience with Cambodia has been particularly slow, due to the fact that several preconditions for a civil society sector to develop, as the basis of democracy, are not fully achieved. Although there exist some degree of social stability, a sense of pride in the majority's Khmer identity, and an emerging middle class quite disenchanted with the current government, there is no inclusiveness of minoritarian groups, there is limited access to information with restrictions imposed by a repressive government, and the institutions are not democratic at all (Fowler, 1999, Jorgensen, 1996). In Cambodia, with the arrival of the UN after the 1991 Paris Peace Accords, a number of international organizations and NGOs installed themselves in Cambodia to contribute with the country's stabilization, reconstruction, and transition into a democratic governance system through their work.

Transnational civil society supporting local civil society

The NGOs, as part of the civil society sector, possess a distinctive legal character concerned with the citizens' well being. They are flexible in processes and support fragile states by providing services that will prevent the state to weaken even more (Un, 2006). They are also called the quiet revolutionaries because many times through the legitimized services they provide, can arise critical consciousness among the people about their reality and start bottom-up mobilizations (Maclure, 2000; Un, 2006). NGOs in Cambodia operate mainly in the areas of public issues, professional networks, values promotion, and advocacy concerns (Downie & Kingsbury, 2001). Their work in the country has been both praised as the building blocks of development and criticized as preventing the government to strive at serving their people if they see the primary needs covered mostly by external agencies. Introducing democracy as a lifestyle to a population that is traumatized by years of

suffering, and has no prior knowledge or experience about the issue, not even interest in who governs their country or how is it done, is not an easy task.

Everyday more academic literature is produced about the relationships between civil society sector and education, or the role of civil society in post-conflict reconstruction. However, there is currently a gap in knowledge about the relationship between education provided by NGOs, with the development of the civil society sector, and with its potential for post-conflict reconstruction and promotion of democratic governance. It is for this reason that the goal of this study has been to identify the contributions that two INGO programs working in the education sector provide to the growth and strengthen of the under-developed civil society sector at the grassroots level.

The research project

The objective of this research project is to describe the education programs that INGOs run in the country and the processes through which they collaborate for the development of a civil society sector at the grassroots level. To do so, a qualitative framework was utilized, drawing on both ethnographic and case study approaches to explore, describe, and interpret shared patterns of behaviours in a culture-sharing group; in this case, Cambodians.

I immersed myself into the two INGOs selected as case studies as a foreigner volunteer, which allowed me the ethnographic experience of sharing the everyday life of the people. It also allowed me diverse methods of data collection such as conducting interviews, reviewing artefacts and documents, and recording observations. The sample of participants included international and local NGO staff, program participants and community members above 21 years old, community leaders, and government representatives.

The information was analyzed following Creswell's (2007) spiral model where the course of data collection, data analysis and report writing are not distinct steps in the process, but complement each other and go interwoven in the process. The final results were triangulated, among internal sources from the studied NGOs and external sources from other NGOs with similar programs which shared their good practices with me to validate my findings.

The NGOs studied are New Humanity and Don Bosco, both international Christian NGOs dedicated to provide education that will contribute to the development of Cambodia through the empowerment of human resources, with a special focus in the most marginalized population. The following two sections summarize the research findings from each case study; both a series of good practices and interventions that mostly indirectly contribute to the acculturation and enculturation of the Cambodians. This acculturation and enculturation is interwoven within patterns of behaviour, practices, and thoughts in line with the democratic governing system ideals and more specifically, in line with the development of the local civil society sector.

Case Study 1: New Humanity

New Humanity runs formal and non-formal educational programs in the areas of schooling, agricultural training, health, and education for disabled people, mainly in the rural setting. Their programs focus into involving the community as a whole in order to promote lifelong learning, capacity building, shared responsibility, good relationships, solidarity among villagers, and a sense of ownership, not only of the NGO-run project, but also of their own lives.

The NGO recognizes the involvement of the community as a whole in the development of their programs as an important feature to promote collaborations among the villagers, which has never been a traditional practice in Cambodian culture. Given this lack of experience, one of the main challenges about promoting teamwork is to ensure the understanding of roles and expectations both at the individual and group level. For this task, cultural sensitivity is important about expectations and delivery of results, especially taking into account that West and East modes of operation are quite different.

Although the achievement of this balance is still work in progress, some of the interventions that the NGO runs within their programs are starting to bear acculturating results. Such interventions include collaborative projects, such as pig and rice banks, the promotion of voluntarism, gathering spaces such as parents meetings and training sessions, or the exchange of material support for in-kind contributions among different sectors of the communities where the NGO works. Though these activities, teamwork, solidarity, and shared decision making among the villagers is promoted, who had probably never been involved in such kind of endeavours. Sneider-Munoz & Politz (2007) support these initiatives regarding them as building blocks of civil associations and locals' engagement within the practice of rights and responsibilities. The social contributions that the organization promotes, transform the idea of community not only as the locality where people belong, but to the degree to which the members experience both a sense of solidarity and significance within it.

Through these collaborative activities that the NGO promotes, the villagers also learn principals of local management and leadership as their involvement with the processes increases, another shift from traditional passive reaction to what the next person in the social hierarchy would do. According to Downie & Kingsbury, 2001 and Hock Guan, 2004, in

order to strengthen and develop the weak civil society sector in Cambodia, the confidence and trust of individual people, of families, and of whole communities have to be restored and promoted. As a result of these NGO-sponsored collaborative projects, trust and collective identity is formed, which encourage problem solving through cooperative action instead of third parties intervention or violence. It is also a break apart from the traditional patron-client system of relationships by involving reciprocity in the social interactions.

Partnerships and inter-sectorial networks are approaches that New Humanity cultivates, with the aim of building a collaborative network of support and engagement in learning. Within the organization, connections are promoted across the different programs run to promote the quest for creative solutions to their local needs using local resources, instead of passively expecting that solutions will be provided by third parties. Agreements with other NGOs working in the education sector and government departments that New Humanity develops, create a foundation of legitimacy to expedite the process of sharing ideas and eventually influencing others in the community, a practice that Barton (2001) regards as civil society basics. At the national level, diverse NGO interactions emphasize the development of long-term relationships based on solidarity, build capacity within the local staff who collaborate with them, and strengthen the civil society sector at the national level among mostly international organizations. However it remains still a challenge to motivate the different organizations and government institutions to leave aside specific interests for the sake of collective interests at the partnership level.

At the international level, New Humanity exchanges human, financial, and material resources, such as in the case of the program advisors, foreign volunteers, and donor funds with other organizations. These exchanges affirm that in developing countries, transnational civil society, in this case represented by international NGOs working in Cambodia, have

become increasingly identified as the primary building blocks of civil development and the bridge between isolated communities and the local as well as global happenings and concerns as Henderson et al. (2007) affirm. They also provide a bridge to the local people and their culture with the ways of the Western world through exposure to foreign people, cultural traditions, and business ways.

The above mentioned connections serve as indicators of the NGOs' contribution to develop a local civil society sector where diverse actors in the community share information and cooperate with each other in the areas of communication, cross-sectoral cooperation and alliance-building (Malena & Fin, 2007), another acculturating practice that breaks away from passivism, patron-client relationships, and individualism.

New Humanity's mandate includes focusing their efforts in those most marginalized by society. Through their programs, this NGO assists ethnic minorities, represented by the Phnong highland tribes, and people with mental and/or physical disabilities. The Phnong minorities receive similar benefits to their Khmer counterparts described above, but also benefit of becoming more aware of the local affairs particular to the highlands, and the opportunity to choose between being active or reactive to such affairs. The programs for disabled people improve their immediate physical condition and support their families in the challenge of living with a disabled person at home in a country with little resources for this sector of the population. These programs also increase the communities' awareness of this topic, even if it is just by acknowledging their differences and potential as members of the community they are. These practices are also contributions to the initial stages of a civil society sector that will be aware of their immediate reality and inclusive of their human resources.

Such efforts however, do not come without barriers of cultural nature primarily. Khmers are a proud ethnicity and historically had not welcomed differences of ethnical, physical, or cultural nature. Their natural reaction has always been to acknowledge the presence of different individuals, however marginalize them in the regular realms of life. New Humanity's programs focus in such populations emphasizes a statement about respect from the NGO towards the beliefs of the people, highlighting however the right to education that any person possesses under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

One last area of intervention is the one related with New Humanity's capacity building efforts through the training of human resources as an investment that is hoped will produce several outcomes. First, that will provide the local staff with tools and resources to perform their jobs in a more effective and efficient way. Speaking of enculturation, it is also hoped that it will open their minds to new ideas and encourage their proactiveness into the development of their own environments, becoming agents of local change for their own communities and the leadership an emerging civil society sector needs, as Padaki (2007) notes. These opportunities of professional development allow the local staff to reflect about the learning that happen on the job and promote environments that foster continous learning, an indicator that Vincent & Byrne (2006) consider essential in the task of building learning partnerships. However, balancing the traditional patterns of Cambodian behaviour from the local staff with the Western expectations of the international staff is another challenge present, as it is also the confusion present in the attempts to bridge traditional behaviours in Cambodia with the demands of the modern world and encouraging the local people to become independent of external aid.

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Case Study 2: Don Bosco Foundation

The education that Don Bosco Foundation provides through its schools, boarding homes, and vocational centres, as the second NGO studied, is holistic, taking into account not only one but the different dimensions of the human being. It is a process of enculturation of the newer generations into the demands of the modern global world, and an effort to acculturate the current generations into a humanistic philosophy of life. Although the development of the civil society sector, as in the case of New Humanity, is not one of the organization's specific goals or priorities, their interventions indirectly contribute to its funding values and pre-conditions.

Don Bosco is run by the Catholic religious congregation of the Salesian Sisters. Their philosophy in terms of education leans strongly towards each student as a multi-dimension individual that if well formed, will have a positive social effect. Most of the students are aware of the importance of the academic knowledge they acquire for future opportunities of life improvement. Other areas of education such as the social and ethical ones are only perceived by the older students, but they also have an impact in all the student body, from kindergarten children to the alumni.

In a culture characterized by fear and mistrust among the people, activities that will bring students together in a collaborative and friendly environment are an important enculturation contribution for moulding social behaviours and sow the basis for the

students' future relationships outside the school setting. Chandhoke (2007) affirms that when interpersonal skills are leveraged, it becomes easier to communicate and identify common grounds for action within the context of developing civil society sectors. Don Bosco promotes these kinds of exchanges through a number of extra-curricular activities run in different settings and modalities, such as the creation of small groups and committees, the daily reinforcement of good social relationships, among other activities. These activities reinforce the students' self-knowledge, self-esteem, and development of skills that will eventually have an impact in the community.

Critical thinking is a characteristic essential in any civil society sector according to Brown & Timmer (2006), given the sector's position as intermediary between civilians and government institutions. This role often places different interests, points of view, and demands that require critical problem solving and resourcefulness. The education that Don Bosco provides, although still in traditional Cambodian fashion where the students tend to be more passive than active in the classrooms, includes a critical thinking component present both inside and outside the classrooms. The staff is trained in its promotion, and it is hoped that the skill will open the eyes of the students to their reality and question it. Although still too early to measure the influence of these practices, it is already possible to note the use of the skill in some of the alumni. These preliminary results are interesting to analyze and record, given the fact that the critical thinking contradicts the traditional passive Cambodian attitude towards the dictations of the people higher in hierarchy, and inserts the citizens as active transformers of their reality, another shift from traditional reluctance to make decisions or follow the flow.

Another acculturation practice that breaks from the traditional extremes of individualistic work is the collaborative nature of community involvement within the

educational programs the NGO provides. Anheier (2004) affirms that the dimensions where civil society and community development take place should be continuously worked and interconnected among themselves in order to ensure a sustainable development. In such regard, parents meetings, working relationships with other NGOs, and with other community members such as the government ministries connect each other to share resources, advocate for their cause, to support mutual endeavours and learn in the process.

As mentioned above in the New Humanity section, capable human resources are a clear indicator of a strong civil society, a sector that Don Bosco enriches by investing in their local staff. The teachers and administrative staff who work for and with Don Bosco, are regarded of high importance for the well functioning of the schools. The teachers are paid fair salaries which allow them to focus in their work and perform at the best of their capacity. They are also encouraged to develop professionally and to be active in the decisions made in regards of the school functioning, a not very common role for the average Cambodian teacher. The teachers in return are highly committed to their job, to the NGO's goals and posses a sense of identity and belonging within the organization where they work. Tan (2008) emphasizes that it is important for teachers to be role models, be respected by their students, and work in partnership with the students' families to inculcate civil and moral values in t students. Such tasks are accomplished at Don Bosco through the high ethic standards that the teachers conduct themselves by, and by visiting the students' homes as possible to build rapport with the families and involve them in the educational process.

This situation however, although beneficial for the students, the NGO, and the teachers, draws an even greater gap between NGO sponsored education and government sponsored education. The reason is that well trained teachers and highly skilled individuals that Cambodia is starting to brew already, tend to prefer to work with international

organizations than with their own government or local organizations. This is not surprising given the difference of working conditions, salaries, and opportunities. However, it hampers the strengthening of the official institutions.

It was also mentioned in the chapter about culture and context the shift in values that has occurred from the traditional Cambodian guidelines of behaviour and valorization, to the ones the Khmer Rouge imposed at gunpoint through their radical communist regime, to the ones the West brought with the arrival of the UN in 1991. Moral values are one of the biggest areas of focus for the Salesians, promoting a humanist approach through the educational programs they provide. Their teachings focus in respecting traditional values as long as the value of the human person is acknowledged and promoted.

Fuller (1991) sustains the contribution of education in citizenship building as its main contribution to prevent that fragile states weaken anymore. A strong citizenship is necessary to reinforce identity and build strong bases for a civil society development (Kocka, 2005). Don Bosco does its part in the promotion of active citizenship by the promotion of volunteer personal contributions to marginalized communities, engagement in civic practices, and promotion of social responsibility within their students.

The promotion of citizenship through these previously mentioned activities develops other values that are also indirect contributions to the development of a civil society sector at the grassroots levels. The empowerment that mainly women gain from the Salesian's efforts, provides them with the self-knowledge to draw strength from within themselves and take an active role in promoting social and community development, such as in the case of the English volunteer teachers group, or the Cambodian VIDES chapter. Such activities are about behaviours that will benefit others, either in the way of leadership roles, or plain social responsibility with the surroundings. Therefore, the extra-curricular activities that

Don Bosco promotes, are regarded as an opportunity for the students to work through risks and understand the rewards of belonging to a collective enterprise with shared responsibilities and joint decision making.

Being the capacity of response to social interest an indicator of a strong civil society sector (Malena & Fin, 2007), the volunteer engagements mentioned above highlight the value of the human person above personal benefit or any economical remuneration. This initiative of volunteering breaks down clientilistic binds, and encourage communities to attend their own needs in an organized and cooperative way (Brown et al. 2008), another shift from the traditional Cambodian practice of waiting for third parties to solve local problems. It also allows the Don Bosco students to realize their own potential, to develop professionally, and reinforce the sense of citizenship mentioned above that comes with working for the development of their country using nothing else but their own persons.

This development doesn't occur free of barriers though. The scars of conflict and socio-cultural characteristics many times clash with the education goals that Don Bosco schools are trying to disseminate. Family history in the lives of their program participants have also a big impact, given the fact that if there is no support at home from what is taught at the school, it is expected that the effects will not achieve the desire levels. At the same time their nature as an international NGO ties them to the dependency of foreign funding. However, it is the Salesians' hope that their temporary contact with the students, will leave an influence that will be sensed by those people they relate to outside the school compounds either in their families, in their workplaces, and hopefully at some point, in their country.

The environment in the country, although peaceful, is far from being ideal. Being Cambodia a fragile state, there exists social repression and mistrust from the government and some individuals towards the organizations. The likelihood of reproducing some of the patron-client relationships emerging between the INGOs and recipient populations is also mirrored in NGO and donors relationships. The system of values shifted during the years of war and conflict, leaving as a result a society interested in many other issues before learning about their newest form of governance, even less motivated to participate in it.

Cambodia is a country in transition. If the past is revisited 25 years ago, there is plenty of evidence to be optimistic about its future. However if we compare it with its neighbours Thailand or Vietnam, it is easy to feel depressed. Nevertheless, it has been with the support of the international community that the post-conflict country is reconstructing itself and finding its own place in the current globalized world order.

This research project has described two cases which are attempting to make a small contribution towards an enormously complex & challenging historical and cultural shift in a post-conflict setting. My argument is that, for external organizations to have a real impact in the acculturation and enculturation processes of non-western, post-conflict settings, it is imperative for them to immerse and acculturate themselves into the context where they work: to learn the language, to learn the culture, the history of the place, the local ways of doing things, and the reasons behind. It is only through this process that these organizations will be able to effectively have a sustainable impact, as the organizations will be able to place themselves in the middle of both cultures and serve as a bridge for a smooth transition and acculturation processes that come with education and exposure to other cultures, rather than a foreign imposition as has been the case of Cambodia.

The two NGOs studied in this project show a clear example of such acculturation process: All the foreign staff speaks the local language, local curriculum is promoted with some additions that the organizations consider important for their mission, and every time more and more staff is local and well trained. Although their practices, missions, locations of action, and resources, are different, they both contribute to the development of the civil society in Cambodia at the grassroots level. They do so mostly in an indirect way through the process of acculturation into the ideals of democracy that their educational programs provide at the personal and community level. Cambodians are very resilient and hardworking people, and although no real change might be seen within a generation or two, the founding blocks are being built slowly but strongly.

It is important to note that although the two NGOs studied are Christian based, their work in a mostly Buddhist country has a social justice focus rather than an evangelization focus. First because under the Cambodian laws it is prohibited to teach any other religion that is not Buddhist. Second, because the social doctrine of the Catholic Church calls for working together with the local people towards Human Rights and Social Justice issues that are common for all human beings regardless of nationality, race, religion, or gender. It is actually the Catholic Church in Cambodia that calls its members to acculturate into the Cambodian lifestyle (learn the local language and deliver all services in Khmer, research on the country's history, and disseminate cultural hallmarks), to raise the moral values in the tradition and culture, and to live the Catholic faith by serving the poor (Catholic Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh, 2008).

This research is hoped that will serve as a contribution to the academic knowledge in the area of relationships between INGO-sponsored education, acculturation practices in fragile states, and civil society development. It is also hoped that will be a source of

practical information for Cambodian policy makers and development workers about practices that have proven to have had a positive impact in both the countryside and urban settings as the country keeps strengthening itself. It is also a reminder that ignoring the culture in policy-making initiatives hampers commitment in reforms and therefore, development sustainability due to the failure of society to take them on board.

Countries such as Canada and other donor states can grow in awareness about inter-sectorial connections such as the civil society development which is usually associated with politics and sociology, and education which is usually associated with training human resources for different purposes. This information will be useful when such donor states find themselves questioning how and where to canalize aid resources if they have a referent of projects that have had positive impacts such as the ones presented here. This research can also be used as a referent by other countries around the world that are emerging from conflict and civil unrest with all the implications and consequences. By being exposed to practices that have proven to be positive in Cambodia, some local adaptations to similar practices can be piloted in other settings, hoping that they will speed the process of reconstruction for any country who wants to blend the outcomes of education with social development and community strengthening.

NGO-sponsored education and the development of civil society as a hallmark of democracy

Globalization, development, and the adoption of Western values as indicators of modernization seem to be signs of the time for the current era the world is living in. They cannot be stopped but they can be evaluated, and it has been done. The results of these evaluations can help mediate extremes: the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, Western and Eastern values.

INGOs working in fragile states have in education the key to find such balance. Through the education they offer, INGOs provide the poorest and most marginalized with the power to cope to the transition the countries usually experience, especially in a post-conflict setting such as the one featured in this study. Through the process of acculturation and enculturation they open the eyes and minds of the locals to the world surrounding them, offering people new opportunities of life and enabling them to have a choice of lifestyles and to identify their roles in the current world order, which includes capitalist markets, Western influence, and a growing knowledge economy. These characteristics however are not always the rule in many countries. However, it is by being immersed in the local context with external influence that INGOs also act as mediators for aiding the developing countries to adapt to the demands of modernity without losing their cultural identity or being exploited under the flag of ignorance. An example of this is their encouragement to develop a civil society sector in countries with no democratic tradition. This initiative's aim is to provide the citizens a voice in governance issues and strengthen democratic institutions, but also to become stronger and more influential in cultural, traditional, and local issues that are important for the communities, as opposed to citizens being on their own. Through their educational programs, INGOs strive to be the bridges that aim to connect the local people in developing countries, their traditions and behavioural patterns, with the wider, constantly changing world. A world of opportunities.

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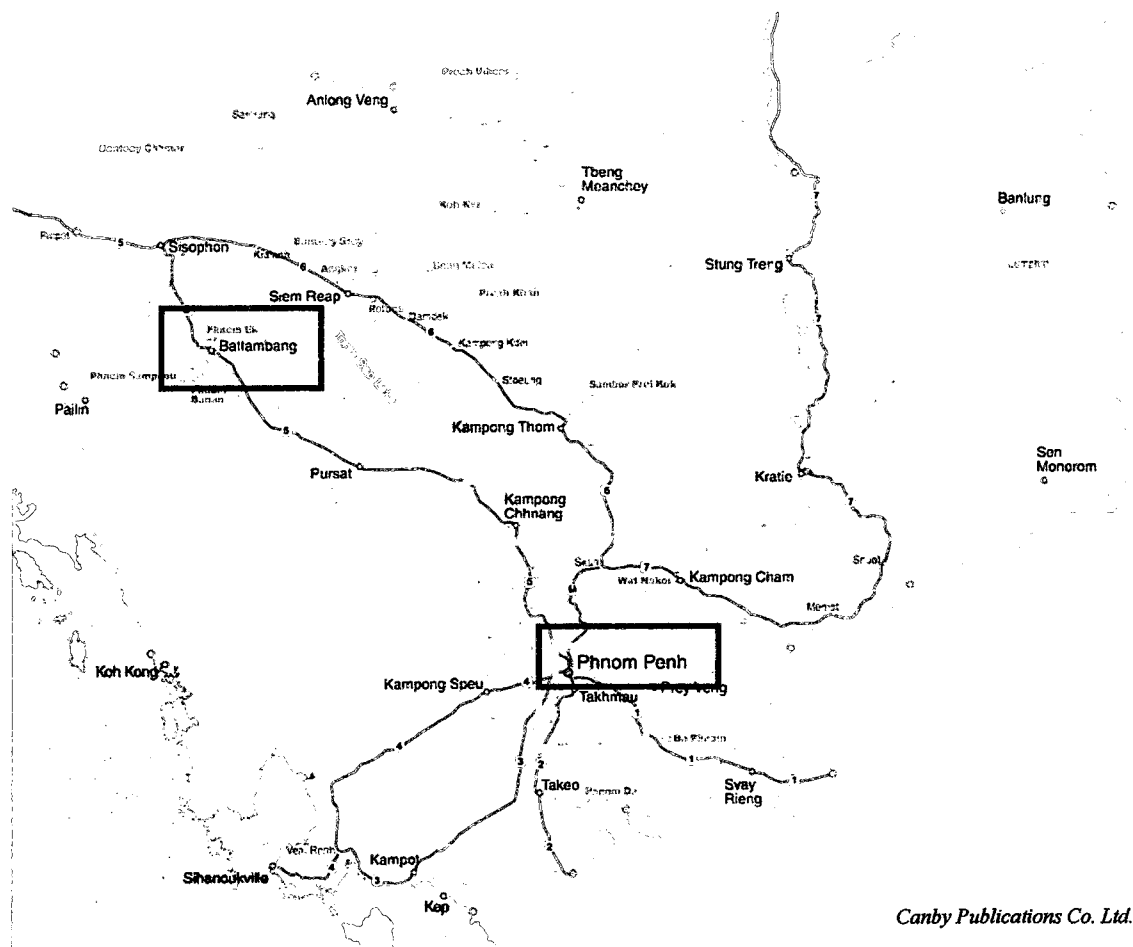
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Appendix #1

Map of Cambodia

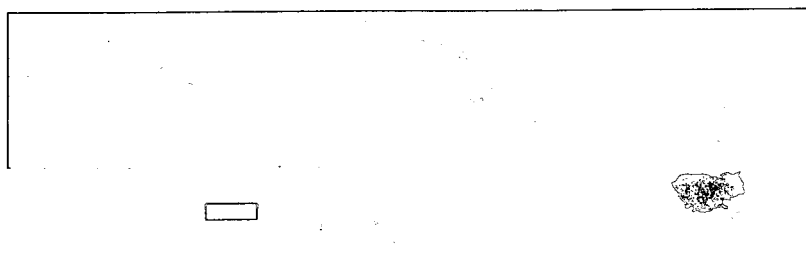


Provinces where New Humanity works

- Kompong Chhnang
- Mondulkiri
- Phnom Penh

Provinces where Don Bosco works:

- Phnom Penh
- Battambang



Appendix #2

*Research Questions***Research Question**

How does the education provided by non-governmental organizations contribute to the development of the civil society sector at the grassroots level in Cambodia?

Sub-questions:

- What are the attributes of Cambodian civil society sector?
- How is the cultural-political-social environment in which the NGO operates?
- What are the attributes of NGO-sponsored education in terms of:
 - Specific content
 - Modes of delivery
 - Benefits
- Who are the participants in NGO-sponsored NFE?
 - How are they selected?
 - To what extent are they fully engaged as learners?
 - What follow-up actions do they engage in?
- What are the effects or outcomes of NGO-sponsored education in local communities?
- What are the constraints or limitations the NGOs encounter in providing their education programs?

The purpose of these ethnographic case studies is to describe and understand the work of two INGOs delivering formal and non-formal educational programs in Cambodia, to explore more in depth the interventions they provide geared to promote an acculturation process that will encourage the development of a local civil society.



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Consent Form – NGO staff

Title of the Study: NGO-sponsored nonformal education and civil society development in Cambodia: An ethnographic case study

Institution: Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Researcher: Monica Escamilla, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, Canada

Also conducting volunteer work with New Humanity and VIDES

Supervisor: Richard Maclure, Ph.D., Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, Canada

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in a research study entitled: "NGO-sponsored non formal education and civil society development in Cambodia: An ethnographic case study" conducted by Monica Escamilla.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of these ethnographic case studies is to describe and understand the work of two NGOs working in Cambodia with nonformal education programs, to discover the reality they face in this work and the level of effectiveness in contributing to the development of the local civil society in Cambodia.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of participating in one 30 minutes interview and/or allowing the researcher to observe the work I do for the NGO I work for. These sessions will be conducted in my workplace and scheduled at a time that is mutually accepted to me and the researcher. I will have the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations of my interview and provide my own feedback and comments. I can also be asked to show the researchers examples of working materials and resources I use in my work.

Risks: I understand that since my participation in this study will entail that I be observed while working, share my personal views on my work and share resources with the researcher, it may cause me to feel that my working practices may be subject to critical analysis. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks and that my participation will remain confidential. I will have the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations of my interview and my participation will not involve an evaluation of my professional practices or personal character.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help me to reflect on my own working beliefs and social interactions with the local community. My participation will help the researchers gain and understanding of the reality of the NGO in terms of social interaction with the local community. In addition, I might request any help from the researcher in my work, as she will be working as part of the organization staff.

Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for understanding and describing the effects of the Non-Formal Education provided by the NGO in terms of strengthening the civil society, and

that my confidentiality will be protected by the omission of my name from any data collected and from the researcher report.

My comments and acts will not be discussed outside the purpose of data analysis by the researchers nor will they be discussed with other participants.

Anonymity: Anonymity will be protected in that my name will not be recorded on any data collected, nor will it be included in the research report. Given that the research will take place in my workplace, I recognize that there may be colleagues who are aware of my participation in the study, though my words and actions will not be identified in the study.

Conservation of data: The data collected (i.e. interview recordings, photocopies of materials, notes of the interviews and observations) will be kept in a secure manner in the supervisor's office with physical data kept in a locked drawer and electronic data in password protected files. Only the researcher will have access to the data and it will be conserved until the end of the researcher's completion of the Masters program (i.e. at least 2 years)

Compensation: The organization will receive the voluntary services of the researcher for the duration of her research with us. I will be offered support in my work from the researcher. I may choose whether or not to accept this offer. This offer of compensation in no way affects my right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences (including the offer of the researcher to keep volunteering for the organization and supporting my personal work). If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdraw will be destroyed if I so choose, or I may choose to allow the data to be incorporated into the research.

Acceptance: I _____ agree to participate in the above research study
(name of participant)

conducted by Monica Escamilla of the University of Ottawa. I understand that by accepting to participate I am in no way waiving my right to withdraw from the student.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher at the numbers mentioned above.

If I have any ethical concerns regarding my participation on this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa ON, K1N 6N5 Canada. 1+(613)-562-5841 or ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness (needed in case where a participant is illiterate, blind, etc):

(Signature) Date: _____



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Participation: My participation will consist essentially of participating in one 30 minutes interview and/or allowing the researcher to observe the educational programs I participate in. These sessions will be conducted in the place where the educational programs take place and scheduled at a time that is mutually accepted to me and the researcher. I will have the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations of my interview and provide my own feedback and comments. I can also be asked to show the researchers examples of materials we use in the programs.

Risks: I understand that since my participation in this study will entail that I be observed, share my personal views and share resources with the researcher, it may cause me to feel that my comments could jeopardize my participation in the NGO educational program. I have received assurance from the researcher that every effort will be made to minimize these risks and that my participation will remain confidential. Participant comments will not be shared with NGO staff participating in the study, or any other participant. I will have the opportunity to review the researcher's interpretations.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help me to reflect on my own social beliefs and interactions with the local community. My participation will help the researchers gain and understanding of the reality of the NGO in terms of social interaction with the local community.

Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for understanding and describing the effects of the Non-Formal Education provided by the NGO in terms of developing the civil society, and that my confidentiality will be protected by the omission of my name from any data collected and from the researcher

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report. My comments and acts will not be discussed outside the purpose of data analysis by the researchers nor will they be discussed with other participants.

Anonymity: Anonymity will be protected in that my name will not be recorded on any data collected, nor will it be included in the research report. Given that the research will take place in the program's venue, I recognize that there may be neighbours and acquaintances might be aware of my participation in the study, though my words and actions will not be identified in the study.

Conservation of data: The data collected (i.e. interview recordings, photocopies of materials, notes of the interviews and observations) will be kept in a secure manner in the supervisor's office with physical data kept in a locked drawer and electronic data in password protected files. Only the researcher will have access to the data and it will be conserved until the end of the researcher's completion of the Masters program (i.e. at least 2 years)

Compensation: I will be offered refreshments during the 20-30 minutes interview. This offer of compensation in no way affects my right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I may withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences (including the offer of refreshments). If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdraw will be destroyed if I so choose, or I may choose to allow the data to be incorporated into the research.

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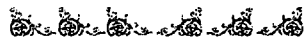
(Signature) Date: _____

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ទំរង់យល់ព្រម : អ្នកចូលរួម



សូម្បី ខ្ញុំឈ្មោះ មូនីកា អេស្ការីលល. ខ្ញុំគឺជានិស្ស នៅសកលវិទ្យាល័យ
អូតាវ៉ា ប្រទេសកាណាដា ឯកទេស លើផ្នែកអប់រំ ។ ខ្ញុំមានសំនួរខ្លះ
ចង់សួរអ្នកអំពីកម្មវិធីទាំងឡាយរបស់ NGO ។ ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ
មានគោល បំណងចង់ពិពណ៌នា អំពីផលប៉ះពាល់ នៃកម្មវិធីអប់រំរបស់ NGO
នៅក្នុងការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍នៃផ្នែកសង្គមស៊ីវិល នៅក្នុង ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា ។
មិនមានចំណាយណាមួយត្រូវ ឬខុសទេ ។
ការសំភាសន៍នឹងចំណាយពេលចំនួន ២០ នាទី ។
រាល់ព័ត៌មានដែលអ្នកផ្តល់នឹងត្រូវបានរក្សាទុកជាការសំងាត់ ហើយ
នឹងយកទៅប្រើប្រាស់សំរាប់តែគោលបំណងសិក្សាតែប៉ុណ្ណោះ ។
វានឹងត្រូវបានបំបាត់ចោលនៅខែ កញ្ញា ឆ្នាំ ២០១០ ។
ការចូលរួមរបស់អ្នកគឺជាការស្ម័គ្រចិត្ត ហើកអាចឈប់នៅពេលណាក៏បាន ។

តើអ្នកមានបញ្ហាអ្វីខ្លះទេ ?

តើអ្នកយល់ព្រមចូលរួមនៅក្នុងការសំភាសន៍នេះទេ ?

អ្នកសំភាសន៍ : ចូលគូសជារង្វង់ជុំវិញ បាទ ឬ ទេ

ប្រសិនបើ បាទ យើងនឹងចាប់ផ្តើម

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Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for understanding and describing the effects of the Non-Formal Education

provided by the NGO in terms of strengthening the civil society, and that my confidentiality will be protected by the omission of my name from any data collected and from the researcher report. My comments and acts will not be discussed outside the purpose of data analysis by the researchers nor will they be discussed with other participants.

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Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness (needed in case where a participant is illiterate, blind, etc):

(Signature) Date: _____

Appendix #4

Interview Protocols

NGO staff

What do you think the characteristics of a strong civil society sector are?

Definition: The civil society (CS) sector is composed of associations, institutions, and public discourses organized around shared values. They are the bridge between citizens and the state.

Based in your answer above, what is your opinion on the state of Cambodia's civil society sector?

Which factors do you consider critical in the development of a strong civil society sector?

Do any of these relate to the NFE programs you run?

Which do you consider are the main benefits of the NFE programs for the community members? (individual, communitarian, and in relation to advancing in democratic practices)

How are the beneficiaries of the NFE programs selected?

Do the participants participate in the program and they go home or to what extend to they engage in the different programs?

Is there any follow up with participants who have gone through the NFE programs you provide? How are they?

Does the NGO and the state institutions work together in any way? How? How is that relationship?

What are the main constraints or limitations you find in your work? As an individual and as part of an organization.

Programs participants

Do you consider that there are enough associations and organizations to cover the needs and interests of the people in your community? Provide some examples.

Have you been involved in any in the past or are you presently involved in any? Describe what is your role

What do you learn in this program?

How is this program run? Do you consider it adequate or would you change? Please explain

What are the main benefits that you see in your individual life of attending this program?

What are the main benefits that you consider your community gets from this program being run here?

How did you get involved in this program?

How is your relationship with the staff and other participants of the program?

Did you know all the people you share the program with before it started?

If yes: was your relationship with them (if any) same as it is now or different? How?

If no: Are you happy, indifferent, or unhappy about the fact that you know them now? Why?

Do you have any relationship with government services or institutions? How has your experience been in that respect?

Local government institution staff

Are you aware of the work (name of the NGO) is doing in the community? Yes/no

As a representative of (name of the ministry or department), do you think their work is valuable for the community? Please explain

What do you think is the current situation of the Civil Society Sector?

Do you work in contact/partnership with NGOs or other kind of Civil Society

Organizations? If yes: How and why? If no: Why?

Do you, as an official representative, consider valuable for a country to have a strong civil society sector? Why?

How is your department/ministry's relationship with the citizens?

- Contact

- Participation

What contents do you consider important that the NGOs cover in their NFE programs?

Why?



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Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator(s) / Supervisor:	Richard Maclure
Co-Investigator(s):	Monica Escamilla
File Number:	#09-08-02
Title of Research Project:	Non-Governmental Organizations Non-Formal Education and Civil Society Development in Cambodia: An Ethnographic Case Study
Type of Project:	Master's thesis
Department and Institution:	Faculty of Education
Research Ethics Board:	<u>Social Sciences and Humanities</u> Chair: Dr. Peter Beyer
Ethics Approval Date:	January 9, 2009
Expiry Date:	January 8, 2010
Documents Reviewed and Approved:	Protocol
Approval Granted:	Ia (Approval)
Special Conditions:	

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the application for ethical approval for the above named research project as of the Ethics Approval Date indicated above and subject to the conditions listed the section above entitled "Special Conditions".

During the course of the study the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove subjects from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the study (e.g. change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment documentation, should be submitted to this office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

Please submit an annual status report to the Protocol Officer 4 weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to either close the file or request a renewal of ethics approval. This document can be found at: http://www.rges.uottawa.ca/ethics/application_dwn.asp

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5841 or by e-mail at ethics@uOttawa.ca.



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Leslie-Anne Barber
Responsable de la déontologie en recherche
Pour le Président du CÉR en Sciences Sociales et Humanités
Peter Beyer

Appendix #6

Interview Codes

S1	NGO 1 (New Humanity) staff members
S2	NGO 2 (Don Bosco) staff members
P1	NGO 1 (New Humanity) program participants
P2	NGO 2 (Don Bosco) program participants
T1	NGO 1 (New Humanity) staff teacher
T2	NGO 2 (Don Bosco) staff teacher
ST	School Teacher –not related with any of the NGO programs-
F2	NGO 2 (Don Bosco) former student
G2	Government representative
GS1	NGO 1 (New Humanity) graduate student
VA	Village Authority

Appendix #7

Summary of external validation

The following table shows in the first two columns the name of several NGOs working in Cambodia and the practices that they have identified as beneficial for civil society development at the local level in the Cambodian reality. The last two columns show if the two NGOs studied: New Humanity and Don Bosco practice such interventions. This comparison was used as a method of external triangulation and validation of the 2 studied NGOs practices.

Organization	Practice	New Humanity		Don Bosco	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
CARE Cambodia					
	Community governance of schools	X			X
	Adaptation of MoEYS curriculum to local settings	X		X	
	Support local ethnic minorities	X		X	
	Link with MoEYS through dialogue for monitoring	X		X	
CARE/InnerChange	Teachers training	X		X	
NEP	Education with holistic approach	X		X	
	Work together with community governance and parents associations	X		X	
EQIP, MoEYS	Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of staff and tailor training based on results		X	X	
	School feeding programs	X		X	
	Health Training for students and community members	X		X	
	Designed interactive materials easy and cheap to reproduce	X		X	

Save the Children Norway	Home based ECCE	X		X	
Save the Children Norway/World Education	Community based research training	X		X	
KAPE	Interview of scholarship candidates	X		X	
World Education/Save the Children Norway	"Learning by doing" capacity building in non-formal education	X		X	
Shanti Volunteer Association	Set up committees to implement activities	X		X	
	Report to donors and MoEYS	X		X	
	Keep in close contact with the local temples		X		X
Shanti/SIPAR/Maryknoll	Library projects	X		X	
DAC/VSO/Marist brothers	Integrate disabled persons in educational programs	X			X
VSO	Teacher meetings	X		X	
AVI/Maryknoll	Local creation of reference books	X		X	
Maryknowll	Kindergarten classes	X		X	
PSE	Tutoring and mentoring for vulnerable students		X	X	
ICC	Khmer literacy for adults and ethnic minorities	X			X