

KNOWLEDGE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Cambodia

Kimseang Am, Cambodia, Bucknell University

Background and Problem

Coconut School is located on Kirirum mountain, a remote area of Cambodia. This school was founded by Ouk Van Day in 2017. He started with a budget of \$5000 from the donations from people in and out of Cambodia, enough to build one classroom. Coconut School's mission is providing free education, shelter, healthcare, and technology to kids in remote communities through their innovative tuition program, "Trash to Tuition". "Trash to Tuition" is a program which students are required to clean up trash from their home and community and bring those to school so that the school can teach them to recycle/repurpose those trash into household items, garden, farming materials, and toys to keep those trash from turning the kids' home into landfill. 90% of the Coconut School is built from trashes (classrooms' wall built out of glass bottles, chairs built out of car tires, etc.). Coconut School Foundation continues because of donations, volunteer teachers and tourism around the Kirirum mountain. With the increase in COVID-19 cases in Cambodia in 2021, the school is severely affected. Without additional support funding and volunteers, coconut school foundation may have to close permanently. If this school closes, 78 students will have no local school to go to. The future of those 78 students will be damaged and follow some of their parents' path with illiteracy.

Goal and Objective

The goal of my project is to provide a comfortable space and technology resources in the library and teach the students basic computer skills. The coconut school just opened back in late 2021 for the kids in the community to study. They are building a new library which will be finished by April 2022. They will ask for book donations for the library and I would like to equip the library with technology, some fans and furniture to make it a full-function library. The technology that is needed according to the school principal is mainly 10 laptops, a TV and internet access.

I am also applying for SHE-CAN "Make a Change Program." Successful scholars/applicants will receive \$2,000 to assist with service project in Cambodia.

Why this project

I have always loved the library. I grew up in a home where it was not a suitable place to focus on my schoolwork and there were not a lot of books/resources I can look up whenever I am curious about something. Coming to the U.S. for college, I found out that in a lot of towns, there are always free local libraries that are opened to public. There, people in that community have access to computers and internet. I wished I had a space where I can go to study and have access to the online resources when I was in school in Cambodia. In addition, during my computer science class, my project partner told me that she took three years of computer science in high school. I recalled what I did in high school was only learning how to type. I did not even know how to scan a piece of paper before I went to university. I was far behind.

In 2019, I volunteered at AIESEC in Cambodia for one year. I was on a team that bring global volunteers to teach students in remote/rural locations in Cambodia. As a team, we recruited and supported around eighty-five volunteers and some of them were sent to the Coconut School, because it was one of the schools that needed help the most. With the persistence of COVID-19, students in rural area were affected the hardest because most of them do not have access to computer and internet to help them learn remotely and do self-study. Therefore, I would like to make the newly built library a comfortable space for them to study and provide them with access to the technology and internet they desperately need.

Potential Challenge

A challenge that I think I might encounter in this project is that parents of the students might not be very keen on sending their kids to school during the pandemic. Dropping out of school is quite common in the rural area of Cambodia because there were not many teachers or resources that motivate the students to learn. In addition, parents often need their kids' help (agriculture work, housework) during this challenging time. However, the coconut school has done a fantastic job connecting and helping the people in the

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community by providing healthcare and some food for them during this COVID-19 pandemic to keep both parents and students involved.

Defining Peace

I define peace by not leaving anyone behind while society progresses. Access to the computer and internet is a basic thing in the first world. However, it was not the case in Cambodia. I believe that technology literacy should be at the heart of education. During the time I volunteered with AIESEC in 2019, we focused on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the United Nation; it is about quality education. The full title of SDG is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

This project contributes to peace by providing study space and technology literacy to the community. When the next generation is educated, they are involved more in their communities to solve the continuous problems. If they are not educated, I do not see the substantial change that will happen in the future because they will not be much different from their parents and will not have any other options to choose besides following their parents' path. The world is a big place, and it has so many opportunities. It is not fair for them to be limited by not having access internet and computer skills.

Computer skills is important. Imagine you are a 10-year-old, you grew up in a rural village without access to smart gadgets (phone, laptop) and internet. When you are curious about something, you ask your parents or relatives, who also had little to no education. Their knowledge does not expand this way. With this project, this kid will have a space where they can go to, have access to computers that are connected to the internet and find answers to their questions and curiosity. They will learn so much more beyond textbooks and could get access to more opportunities such as higher education scholarships.

Action plan

Timeline	Action	Descriptions
05/25/2022 – 06/01/2022	Planning with the principal	Get started by planning with the school principal and the full-time teachers on the logistics and trainings.
06/01/2022 – 07/01/2022	Buy and deliver the equipment & furniture	Get an internet installation and connection for the library. Buy the equipment (10 laptops, a TV) and fans and furniture. Deliver them to the Kirum mountain.
07/01/2022 – 08/01/2022	Open and promote the library	The library will be open to the public and the students to explore. Write an instruction references on how to use the resources/materials in the library.
08/01/2022 – 08/05/2022	Buy computer lesson book and train volunteers	Purchase 12 computer lesson books in Khmer. Prepare the three volunteers for the 3-day in-person sessions with the students.
08/05/2022 – 08/07/2022	Computer training sessions	Students learn basic computer skills instructions on computer use.

Expected Results & Sustainability

This project will allow students in Coconut Schools to be proficient in computer skills and have access to vast information on the internet at their fingertips. In the short-term, they will be able to use those resources for regular learning and access online materials without having to pay. In the long-term, the students will be proficient in computers/internet and will be able to help themselves. For example: finding opportunities for higher education in the city (Phnom Penh) or abroad. This project is sustainable because the school will have the equipment needed to start up and they will only need to sustain the internet cost in the future. The students will be able to teach themselves using resources in this library and on the internet and find opportunities that will further enhance their education in the future. This project will prevent those 78 students from dropping out of school and help coconut school to thrive.

Name: Kimseang Am
Project Name: Knowledge at your fingertips
School: Bucknell University

Note: all funds in US dollars.

Projects for Peace grant:	10,000
Additional Funding, if any:	2,000
Total funding available:	12,000

TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING	
\$	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURES:	
\$	12,000.00

Student Expenses										Project Expenses									
(Including Airfare)		Lodging		Communications		Food (Biweekly)		Miscellaneous		Travel and Lodging		Direct Equipment and Supplies		Marketing and Event Support		Staffing Costs		Miscellaneous	
Round-trip flights	1360	3 days quarantine	120	Mobile Data	10	Food	280	Visa	160	Volunteers accommodation	90	Week 1 (cable + Internet installment)	370	Week 7 (Refreshments)	480	Week 7 : Stipend to volunteers	150	Week 1 (1 year of internet)	420
		3 days at Coconut School	90					Covid test	130	Gas	250	Week 2 (10 laptops)	500	Week 7 (Computer books)	110			Week 7 Library & tech. maintainence	500
										Volunteers' food	270	Week 3 (fans)	500						
										Car rental	210	Week 4 (furniture)	1500						
Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total	
1,360		210		10		280		290		820		####		590		150		920	

Total Student Expenses:	\$2,150.00
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Total Project Expenses:	\$ 9,850.00
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