

**Peacebuilding through Empowerment, Computer Literacy, and Khmer Rouge Education
Cambodia
Gettysburg College
Sokuntheary Heang, Cambodia, Gettysburg College
May 14 – August 10, 2022**

Background and context:

Recovering from genocide and violence which happened just a few decades ago, Cambodia is still struggling to raise itself out of poverty. About 18 percent of Cambodians are living below the poverty line, which is estimated to be \$ 2.70 capital per day.¹ In rural areas especially, approximately 55% of adolescents will drop out of school because of poverty.² Most adolescents, especially young girls, start working in garment factories, farming and tourism sectors as servers. They do not have a choice but to earn money to help their parents and families. According to UNICEF Cambodia, while poverty is a main problem affecting child education, lack of proper resources, teaching standards and attending school irregularly make students fall behind, lose hope, and finally drop out altogether.³ Large numbers of underprivileged boys and girls in remote areas remain out of school, and education disparity makes children from rural areas struggle to go to and stay in school. It is altering them from reaching their full potential. While receiving basic education was a privilege for me, I could not help but notice the lack of standard personal empowerment, career aspiration, and knowledge of new technology, which is important in this fast-developing world. After finishing high school, my eyes were opened when I went to the city for the first time; my eyes and mind were filled with new opportunities and resources. I want to impact this education disparity that makes students in rural areas fall behind.

Partner Organization:

Started in 1999, [Youth for Peace \(YFP\)](#) is a peacebuilding initiative that aims at promoting social justice and peace through active youth participation in the community. One of the many programs operating now is called Community Peace Learning Center (CPLCs). The five CPLCs were transformed from genocide's mass killing sites, and they promote peacebuilding, historical education, remembrance, and healing through connecting younger generations to genocide's victim-survivors, creating safe spaces for dialogue and learning. CPLCs program components include museum and exhibition rooms, dialogue rooms, and information centers. The museum and exhibition rooms have a collection of resources related to Khmer Rouge history, and dialogue group rooms are a safe conversational space for peer education and recreational activities. The information center libraries were created for the public to access information with resources from archived material: newspapers, magazines, and more. My project partners with and focuses on the Battambang Province CPLC. This proposal was developed through conversations with their team.

Project details:

Pairing my passion with the existing program at YFP, I am driven to implement a project that will not only empower youth through leadership and technology, but also connect youth with Cambodian history, learning about it using the help of digital technology. There are three components of this project:

- **Basic Computer Literacy Training:** Although the CPLCs has a computer lab space, they lack computers, coursework, and the resources to implement the computer training sustainably. The goal of this project is to create and implement training of basic computer skills to secondary and high school students from Samrong Knong district, Battambang Province. With the *Davis Project for Peace* grant, I am planning to purchase 10 desktops to install in the center. The electricity source was installed by the YFP recently; however, there is currently no internet connection installed in the center. Therefore, I will find and install a local internet network to the center so that the computer lab can work effectively. For this training, I am planning to design a comprehensive curriculum to cover the topics such as keyboard function, mouse operation, Microsoft Word, basic internet search, and electronic mail function. I believe these

¹ World Bank, "The World Bank in Cambodia", (2020)

² UNICEF Cambodia, "Education: for every child, quality education and life skills", (2018)

³ UNICEF Cambodia, "Education"

skills can help the students get started in familiarizing themselves with the computer and increase their curiosity of technology and the many resources available to them through computer literacy.

- *Learning about the genocide's history and understanding about social justice issue using digital tools:* Once students become familiar with technology, they can use it to do research on various topics. Specifically in this program, the goal is for students to educate themselves about the history of the Khmer Rouge and learn about social justice through resources available online. I have compiled some digital resources on Khmer Rouge history, peace and reconciliation projects, feature stories with victim-survivors, and other digital books and archives on this subject matter that will be one component of the digital education program.
- *Self-empowerment through storytelling, knowledge sharing and dialogue groups:* To encourage self-development, inspire students to dream of a better life, and to complete their studies, this training design includes a peer-education program focused on experience sharing and dialogue. The goal of this component is to invite successful college students, [Harpswell](#) and [SHE-CAN](#) scholars from Phnom Penh, to meet with the village students to share their educational experiences, their career aspirations, challenges, and their journeys to where they are today. I believe storytelling is a powerful tool to inspire students to believe in themselves and keep fighting despite financial or social struggles.

Sustainability

The goal of this program is to promote meaningful and sustainable education for underprivileged village children. With access to computers, students will be motivated to visit the center to practice their computer and research skills. In addition, to make it sustainable, I intend to train 3 to 5 village students who join the first cohort program to be student trainers for the next cohorts, and the cycle will repeat. This way some of the students can develop their leadership skills and keep the program running in a sustainable way. Moreover, the design of this program's curriculum will be comprehensive and detailed, intended to be a regular curriculum and the basis for potentially more advanced training in the Center.

Tentative Plan over the Summer:

- May 14th – June 1st: Travel to Cambodia and coordinate planning with the Youth for Peace organization.
- June 1st – June 15th: Develop a computer literacy training curriculum and compile digital information for Khmer Rouge history online.
- June 15th – June 30th: Install computers in the computer lab, ensuring that the network, Internet, electricity is all set up and operating effectively. At the same time, recruit and connect 20 to 30 underserved village students for the program.
- July 1st – July 15th: For monitoring and evaluation, students will do an assessment survey before the training. The project gets start with the computer training program.
- July 15th – July 20th: Training to educate about the history of the genocide and social justice issues, theory and practice using digital tools
- July 20th – July 23rd: Invite college students to visit with the younger students to share their experience, and initiate dialogue groups with Khmer Rouge victim-survivors.
- July 25th – July 27th: Village students discuss what they learned during the past two weeks – students will do an assessment survey after the training for evaluation of the program.
- August 1st - August 10th: Conduct training for student trainers. Prepare a summary of the program.

Connection to Peace

I believe a peaceful society is a place where everyone is equal, able to go to school and receive education as it is their universal right. Peaceful societies start from the peaceful minds of individuals. Education can lift people out of poverty and that alone reduces domestic violence, and crime in society. In addition, this program will bring students from different backgrounds and religious beliefs to spend time and learn in harmony together. Besides learning, this program will create a bonding experience through some leisure activities embedded in this program such as cooking, eating, group work and more. Dialoguing about social justice will promote the students' critical thinking skills and their knowledge of peacebuilding. These actions prompt them for more involvement in the community, with the community and for the community.

Peacebuilding through Empowerment, Computer Literacy, and Khmer Rouge Education
 Cambodia
 Gettysburg College
 Sokuntheary Heang, Cambodia, Gettysburg College
 May 14 – August 10, 2022

Proposed Budget

Materials & Supplies	
Cost of computers	1 Computer = \$ 500 10 Computers = \$ 5000
Cost of furniture (<i>Chairs</i>)	1 Chair = \$ 25 10 Chairs = \$ 250
Internet Installation and Monthly Fee	\$ 300
Cost of hiring labor to install the computers	\$ 300
Training materials (<i>Notebooks, markers, pens, pencils, notepads...</i>)	\$ 300
1 Water filter (<i>Instead of purchasing bottled water for students, I think installing a clean water filter on site is more sustainable as it can be used for a long time. There is no water filter on the training site now</i>)	\$ 500
Snack (<i>For students during the training</i>)	\$ 60
Food (<i>I believe food brings people together in a meaningful way, so I am planning to organize a few dinners and lunch gatherings over the course of the training.</i>)	\$ 500
Transportation & Living Expenses	
In-country transportation for 3 speakers/volunteers (<i>As one component of the training, I am planning to invite college students, Harpswell and SHE-CAN scholars from Phnom Penh to come to the village and share their knowledges and stories to the younger students</i>)	1 person = \$ 30 round trip 3 people = \$ 90 round trips
Round trip flight to Cambodia for me	\$ 1700
Three months living expenses in Cambodia (<i>Including housing, food, and local transportation for me</i>)	\$ 1000
Total Spending:	\$ 10,000