

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR SEX WORKERS IN CAMBODIA

MID-YEAR REPORT FOR FORIX FOUNDATION

JANUARY – JUNE, 2014

Working with our local partners, Khmera, we have been operating Non-Formal Education (NFE) classes in 5 locations to train entertainment workers, destitute and vulnerable girls in two districts: in Lu Village, and Thmey Village in Phnom Penh. There are currently 59 students enrolled in 5 classes at 5 locations. Originally, 75 students were enrolled in 5 classes at 5 locations, but 16 students have dropped out, mostly relocating without notice. This year the program is maintaining a higher retention rate --about 79 percent-- as compared to 70 percent last year.

Classroom Location	Initial Number of Students	Enrolled in Skills Courses		Dropouts	Number of Students Remaining	Retention Rate	
		M	F				
Srey Sros Karaoke Parlor	16	0	16	0	16	100%	
Borei Kamakor	13	0	13	7	13	100%	
Ta Chan Chum Mith Karaoke and Restaurant	13	0	13	3	5	8	62%
Sen Sok Karaoke 1	12	0	12	3	3	9	75%
Sen Sok Karaoke 2	21	1	20	3	8	13	62%
Total	75	1	74	16	16	59	79%

Core Objective

The principal objective of the NFE program is to promote and provide non-formal education to poor girls and entertainment workers, so that they have numerical skills, reading skills, writing skills, and problems solving ability. From these skills they can increase their standard of living, free from sexual exploitation and discrimination, and be able to leave the exploitation of sexwork.

Lotus Outreach believes in the transformative power of education. In a country where only 64% of the adult population has basic literacy skills –and 43% of women have not completed the first grade– the basic literacy, numeracy and living skills provided by NFE classes can mean a big difference. Education empowers women to be leaders in their households and their communities, their own children are more likely to receive an education, and both they and their children are more likely to live long, healthy lives.

Outcomes and Impacts

Since the program began, approximately 750 persons have been enrolled in Lotus Outreach’s NFE classes, and less than 4% of graduates return to work in the sex trade. Many move on to further their skills in cosmetology and tailoring and acquire much-sought-after positions in garment factories and beauty salons. This year, 75 new students began classes and skills training in 5 classes at 5 locations.

Students are encouraged to borrow books from the NFE library box. So far this year, 75 students and 78 neighbors/community members have borrowed books 186 times! Most of the books borrowed are: magazines, folk stories, and self-help books. Their subject matter includes: the psychology of building happiness, finding peace of mind, motivational writing, diabetes, and brain and intellectual development.

The Lotus Outreach NFE skills training currently includes 24 students, 16 of which are also enrolled in regular NFE classes. Fourteen students are learning tailoring; six are doing cosmetology through local beauty salons, and three more are doing cosmetology through their own start-up salons; one is learning cooking and baking through an outside institution.

Thirty-six NFE students have received counseling on women’s reproductive health, HIV and other STD’s. Sixty-six students have been counseled on safe sex and birth spacing.

Our local partner has collected impact measurements from field activities, and monitoring has been provided by our Field Operations Director, Glenn Fawcett and our Cambodian Country Representative, Raksmei Var.

Challenges

Starting fewer classes at fewer locations resulted in a lower number of students beginning NFE this year, with only 75 students beginning their studies and 16 of those dropping out. The current total is now 59 students. The retention rate for 2013 at this point was 70 percent, (104 students enrolled with 31 dropping out); the retention rate for 2014 is 79 percent.

It is a continuing difficulty of this program that NFE students may pick up and leave very suddenly without notifying us or even their friends, and this can make them very hard to track down.

CASE STUDY: Vuth Thavy

Vuth Thavy grew up in the rural Kondal Province which surrounds Phnom Penh and serves as a major agricultural and economic belt for Cambodia's capital. She is the second oldest of eight children, of which six are girls and two are boys.

Thavy dropped out of school at the sixth grade because of the economic needs of her family which had made her attend very irregularly. Not knowing much math, nor how to read or write very well, she moved to Phnom Penh where she found employment as a waitress in a Chinese noodle restaurant.

So much of Cambodia lives below the international poverty line that Thavy's very slight income from waiting tables was a sad step up from her family's earnings. Twenty-eight percent of Cambodia's population lives on less than \$1.25 per day, and Thavy's new job landed her an income of \$50 per month, or about \$1.67 per day. The area where Thavy works is surrounded by Phnom Penh's infamous karaoke brothels, which promise incomes twice what Thavy makes, but come at a much greater cost.

After just one month at the noodle restaurant, she succumbed to the temptation of earning up to \$100 per month at the Karaoke bars nearby. She worked in this environment for one year before deciding that she could not continue and wanted to move up and out.

Thavy knew she needed to learn to read and write better, and she looked to the NFE program to help build the basic skills that would help her get out of poverty. Khemara's staff welcomed her into the Borei Kamakor class in January 2014.

From the very beginning Thavy studied very hard and excelled in her NFE class. She asked to be enrolled into the Sewing Skills class, and was quickly accepted based on her superb performance.

Now at age 23, Thavy is working hard to avoid the pitfalls which loom over so many young women in her neighborhood. Thanks to your support, she hopes to someday open her own tailoring shop!

Thank you for supporting Thavy and the Non-Formal Education Program!

Additional pictures are available as an attachment to this report.

