



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

The Angkor Tree Project

www.theangkortreeproject.org



A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGEMENT

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Sustainable Development Goal 4

Quality Education : Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

...

4.C By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states

Many would call 2020 a year to forget as soon as possible. At the Angkor Tree Project, we see it also as a year of opportunities, a year of changes, and re-inventing and adapting.

The crisis taught us that distance-learning and on-line activities are hard to achieve in a country where digital resources are scarce, and digital illiteracy is rather a rule than an exception. The crisis also showed us how vital digitalisation is for the future of this country. And that there is a long way to go.

You will read in this report how we adapted throughout the year and how we implemented alternatives to the traditional classroom teaching approach. Most important is that many of these alternatives have become the blueprint for our future development.

Today, we are proud to announce that we serve over 200 children and adolescents in our daily English classes and that our Teacher Training Program has come to maturity, able to deliver high quality pre-service, early-career and in-service training, as well as improved language training for teachers, and an IT for teachers program. We have inked close cooperation with Hands Across The World, a German-Australian NGO, allowing us to reach more teachers and increase our impact.

We found and implemented a very attractive method to encourage local teachers to practice their language with native and near-native speakers through the Language Buddies program.

In 2020 we also strengthened our efforts, as chair of the Provincial Education Sector Working Group, to lead the community of education NGO's in the province of Siem Reap through the crisis. We have deepened our commitment to the community of education by accepting an engagement as a NEP, the Cambodian NGO Education Partnership, board member.

And of course, 2020 was the year where we moved to our new campus! Large and clean classrooms, facilities for hand washing everywhere, clean and modern sanitary provisions and a large meeting/training room. We sincerely hope that, once the borders have reopened, many of you will come to have a look!

We want to express our deepest gratitude and respect to everyone who made our dreams here in Cambodia come true. Thank you to our teachers, our trainees, our colleagues in other NGO's, and not in the least our many supporters and sponsors abroad.

Thank you!

Sopheak Ngo
Headmaster

Nat Son
Head of Teacher Training

Mark Desmaele
Operational Support

2020 IN DETAIL

English classes for children and adolescents.

The English lessons, as a supplement to the curriculum of the official schools, were forcedly stopped at the end of March 2020. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Cambodian government decided a nationwide closure of all schools, including NGO's and informal teaching projects.

By mid-April, shortly after the Khmer New-Year break, it became clear that this closure would be long-lasting. We had to rethink and redesign how we would and could ensure some continuity in our classes. Children don't have laptops here, and smartphones are scarce in these age-groups. Distance education not being a viable option, we decided to implement a doorstep-teaching approach. Our teachers prepare tasks for their students, walk from house to house to distribute and explain the task to their students, and collect the tasks one or two days later.

Day after day, our teachers walked for kilometres, sometimes under a blazing sun, sometimes through heavy rain showers, to keep all of our students on board. Luckily some students were able to bring their homework to the school themselves!

Was this the perfect solution? No, certainly not! But it was the only workable solution. Of course, our students made less progress than they would have made under normal circumstances. But they continued learning.

In early September, NGO's were allowed to reopen their doors. We were among the first to adopt clear and safe operating procedures, including body-temperature measurement, hand-hygiene, safe distancing, wearing face-masks, etc.

The need for social distancing made us decide to shrink the groups of students allowed at school simultaneously. We reduced the duration of every class to one hour, with no more than nine students! Very quickly, we found out that the progress made by our students in this new setting was significantly better than before. One hour of class in a smaller group is better than 2 hours (including a break) in a larger group. That's why we decided to continue this setting, even when the restrictions will not apply any more.

Teacher training (for teachers of English in informal schools)

The teacher training program has been run for the third consecutive year. Unfortunately, the lockdown also affected these training courses. We were able to continue on-line (most of our trainees work or volunteer for NGO's and informal schools, and these have IT-equipment and internet connectivity). Of course, in-class observation and coaching were no longer possible, and we re-designed the workshops.

This resulted in 10 short (4 on-line sessions of 2 hours each, spread over two weeks) modules. The participation- and completion rate remained at the same high level as before the pandemic (a maximum of 15 participants per module, all fully-booked).

In September, we were able to resume the face-to-face workshops. Observation and in-class coaching were still limited due to limited activities and restrictions in many organisations.

Teacher training (for teachers of English in public schools)

The lockdown also hit our EPPS (English in Public Primary Schools), which addresses teachers in public schools. Teachers in Public Schools mostly do not have access to computers and the internet, nor were the ones in our program. Therefore we had no other option than to suspend this program temporarily! We were able to resume in September.

We decided to restart the entire program with the same participants (only one dropped out for health reasons) from the very start and continue it until August 2021. We lost one year, unfortunately, but inevitably.

1. Language proficiency training for teachers.

The English for Teachers program continued on-line, be it with a lower number of participants. As we focus on conversational skills (speaking), this was not easy. Conversation using Zoom is challenging.

Still, we kept two groups of 15 trainees each, two sessions per week. The results are not bad, there is some progress, but still, it's below expectation.

We have been looking for better ways to have conversation activities in a Covid-safe setting and developed the Language Buddies Project.

2. Language Buddies.

Go on!

Don't be afraid!

Why don't you say something?

If you have friends who know you're learning English, you've probably heard these requests before. Don't they know it's not that easy? Speaking English is hard! You want to speak it correctly, but it's complicated. You might not always find the correct word. Or maybe your mouth refuses to make the right sounds. Even if you're a highly social person, it can be scary to speak in another language, especially in a group.

Wondering how to overcome these problems and fears?

Language Buddies is the solution!

Chatting is a fun, friendly way to learn English from native or near-native speakers. You can talk or video chat. You can learn every-day words and expressions that are not in your coursebooks! You can get cultural insights from your chat-partners. You will gain confidence and improve your pronunciation. But above all, you will have fun, lots of fun.

And it's completely free!

For native or near-native speakers of English, English teacher students, English teachers or any equivalent profile, Language Buddies offers the opportunity to become a mentor to a student (primarily teachers in training) in a well-organised manner.

How does it work?

It's pretty simple.

On one side, there are mentors, native or near-native speakers, who commit to having two hours a week of on-line conversation with a mentee in a developing country.

On the other side, there are mentees, students and teachers in developing countries who want to improve their language proficiency.

Mentor and mentee meet one-to-one, using a tool of their choice (Zoom, Messenger, WhatsApp, Teams or any other means).

It is crucial to have a regular schedule, for example, every Monday at 17.00 and every Saturday at 11:00.

The topics of conversation are communicated a few days in advance. Mentor and mentee will receive a 'Target language Sheet'. This 'Target Language Sheet' is a tool. It's a vocabulary and idioms list that helps mentor and mentee to keep the conversation alive. It's not a list of all words that need to be used; it's a list of words that can be used.

Mentors also receive a 'Helper Sheet'. This 'Helper Sheet' contains a series of questions that the mentor can use during the conversations. Again, it's a tool, not a list of mandatory questions!

But you're free to deviate as much as you want. After all, the purpose of Language Buddies is to help people practise their day-to-day English!

Today, we have 45 mentors and 45 mentees in the program. The results are very encouraging, not to say spectacular. We see significant progress in fluency and pronunciation with all the participants. And till now, only two mentees and one mentor dropped out.

See: <https://www.languagebuddies.org>

Teacher training (for teachers of General subjects in informal schools)

In November 2019, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with "Stichting Doenkers" vzw, a Belgian organisation, to cooperate in setting up a teacher training program, similar to the one we have for teachers of English, but targeting teachers of general subjects (Khmer, mathematics, science, ...) in informal schools.

We have concluded this program, part in workshops, and from April on on-line.

Still, we have decided not to continue this program. We have specialised in teaching English; we have a team that has been trained for that. We know how to teach English, and we know how to train and coach English teachers.

General subject teaching, and particularly the Khmer language, requires another skillset. We decided not to further develop in that direction but to continue to improve on our core activities.

Teaching English is essential. Knowledge of English is an important, not to say the most important, lever to the local population's cultural, social and economic emancipation.

Collaboration

In 2019 we again invested in participating in 'SEST' (Siem Reap Education Support Team). In this government consultative body, all education actors come together (the so-called Provincial Education Sector Working Groups).

We are convinced that SEST can play a significantly more important role in aligning and coordinating activities of the many dozens of NGO's that are active in this region. But NGO's are not always the easiest partners to work with, mainly because many of them are highly dependent on donor-organisations abroad. They sometimes tend to serve the donors agenda rather than the local community.

2020 was an extremely challenging year in that perspective. Many NGO's reduced their activities. Some even closed their doors completely (and some will probably never reopen). Meetings were difficult, on-line, and the ongoing uncertainty of what is allowed, what is not allowed and when operations can restart was the primary concern of all NGO's.

SEST has assisted in implementing Safe Operating Procedures and has been the facilitator and promotor of regular contact with the authorities (POE, the provincial office of education)

In 2020, we were asked to take some responsibility in NEP, the NGO Education Partnership. NEP is a membership-organisation of education-related NGO's and serves as a platform for cooperation between NGO's and as a spokesman of NGO's to the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. We have accepted this challenge, and Mark joined NEP's board of directors, with a particular focus on communication and on broader participation of all NGO's.

SOME LEARNINGS FROM COVID

Covid, and the successive lockdowns that were its consequence, forced us to rethink, sometimes fundamentally, how we are dealing with our mission. What can we do better? What should we do differently? How can we become more flexible and adapt more fastly to a rapidly changing context?

One of the most important conclusions is that we, as an NGO, more than before, need to concentrate on our core mission: bringing bilingual education to Cambodia's younger generations to enable them to enter the global community as equal partners. English language classes and the training of English teachers are our primary leavers to achieve this.

Did you know that bilingual children have a better ability to focus and ignore distractions in the environment? That's because the part of the brain called the executive function, used for planning, judgment, working memory, problem-solving and staying focused on what's relevant, is stronger in bilinguals. Whenever you speak, both languages are active. The brain has to work to suppress one language while the other is being used. That mechanism employs the brain's executive function more regularly in bilinguals, and therefore it becomes more efficient. Bilingual kids can switch from one activity to another faster and are better at multitasking than monolinguals. That's also thanks to the brain's executive function, giving bilinguals better cognitive control over information that allows them to switch tasks.

Bilinguals have increased mental flexibility and creativity. When you learn there is more than one word for an object, it stretches the mind in new ways. It gives children greater mental flexibility and creativity as they have two windows through which they view the world. Renown psychologist Vygotsky stated that "bilingualism frees the mind from the prison of concrete language and phenomena."

Secondly, we need to introduce technology in our curriculum and our classrooms. The digital divide is showing here in its extremes. Very few people have the equipment, and even fewer know how to use it beyond Facebook or chat apps. We need to develop technology access in education and develop teachers' 21st-century skills as a core element in their training.

A BLUEPRINT FOR OUR FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The Angkor Tree Project

Teacher Training

English Language Training

Pre-Service
Early Career
Training

Teachers in
Public
Schools (510)

In-Service
Advanced
Training

IT for
Teachers

English for
Teachers

Language
Classes Grade
1-12



Teacher Learning Community – TLC (around 250 members)

Library

workshops

master classes

webinars

sharepoint

library

E-learning Platform (www.tdso.online)

WHO ARE WE?

Board of directors Cambodia

- Sopheak Ngo, Chairman
- Nat Son, Board Member
- Houk Theun, Board Member
- Mark Desmaele, Board Member

Board of directors Belgium

- Pieter Thiels, Chairman
- Ludwig Jegers, Board Member
- Marie Desmaele, Board Member
- Sandra Van Hooydonck, Board Member
- Sylvia Van Lint, Board Member
- Mark Desmaele, Board Member

Management Team Cambodia

- Sopheak Ngo, Headmaster
- Nat Son, Head of Teacher Training
- Mark Desmaele, operational support

Our Teacher Team

- Sopheak (lead)
- Ann
- Candy
- Set



Our Trainer Team

- Houk
- Sokly
- Nat (lead)
- Souri
- Chandara
- Sothea

Our Support Team

- Eang
- Mark
- Sokun



FINANCIAL REPORT

Full details, including justification of each issue, is available on-line at
www.theangkortreeproject.org

Below an overview (in USD and EURO):

Figures subject to approval by the Board of Directors

| Expenses | Total in USD | Total in EUR |
|----------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 100 Rent | -12,522.30 \$ | -10,268.29 € |
| 101 Building Maintenance | -1,303.98 \$ | -1,069.26 € |
| 103 Utilities | -1,863.41 \$ | -1,528.00 € |
| 200 Salaries | -41,543.64 \$ | -34,065.78 € |
| 201 Insurances-Med Exp | -638.16 \$ | -523.29 € |
| 202 Other staff cost | -3,699.14 \$ | -3,032.81 € |
| 203 staff training | -935.23 \$ | -766.89 € |
| 205 Trainee incentives | -1,950.00 \$ | -1,599.00 € |
| 300 School materials | -3,250.90 \$ | -2,664.40 € |
| 350 Sponsored Events | 0.00 \$ | 0.00 € |
| 400 Breakfasts | -403.60 \$ | -330.95 € |
| 401 Volunteer costs | -3,929.96 \$ | -3,222.57 € |
| 500 Family support | -4,833.50 \$ | -3,963.47 € |
| 896 Meetings and Seminars | -523.73 \$ | -429.46 € |
| 897 Representation Cost | -88.90 \$ | -72.90 € |
| 898 Membership Fees | -54.52 \$ | -44.60 € |
| 899 Finan and adm cost | -628.36 \$ | -512.55 € |
| Income | -78,169.33 \$ | -64,094.22 € |
| 900 Donations | 33,052.95 \$ | 26,981.60 € |
| 901 Donations Org | 69,302.15 \$ | 56,527.04 € |
| 902 Grants | 17,429.63 \$ | 14,216.66 € |
| 905 Events | 676.30 \$ | 551.63 € |
| 909 Volunteer Contribution | 1,243.16 \$ | 1,014.00 € |
| 910 Other income | 0.02 \$ | 0.02 € |
| 997 Expense Accounts | -5,235.13 \$ | -4,030.77 € |
| 998 Tax Withholding | 55.66 \$ | 45.64 € |
| | 116,524.74 \$ | 95,305.82 € |

Please note that USD to EUR exchange rate fluctuated significantly in 2021. Most of our expenses are in USD; most income is in EUR
The income includes funding for 2021 that was booked on our account end of December 2020 (Section 901)

THANK YOU

The Angkor Tree Project is an educational project. No educational project can exist without the support of governments and/or sponsors. Government support in Cambodia will probably be impossible for many years, which is why we are very grateful to our many sponsors. Our operation in 2020 was possible, thanks to your support!

Thank you Andreea, Ann, Marine, Chris, Dirk, Magda, Erik, Mario, Jean Pierre, Ingrid, Marie, Bie, Elsy, Erik, Geert, Goedele, Michael, Veronique, Guy, Hort, Didier, Wies, Iris, Jan, Johan, Leo, Johannes Karel, Kathleen, Elvire, Patrick, Luc, Agnes, Manu, Marjet, Marleen, Rene, Lutgarde, Michel, Nick, Rita, Myriam, Serge, Jan, Steven, Suzanne, Sven, Pascale, Patrick, Stefan, Vera, Rudi, Stijn, Erwin, Monique, Werner, Wim

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VARIOUS

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