

Column:
What is literacy?

Literacy, as it is understood today, refers to the capacity to read and write a simple statement about everyday life and also the capacity to use reading and writing as a means of communication. It is also a foundation for all further learning, thereby constituting a basic human right. As such, literacy brings about profound individual and social benefits.



When you are illiterate...
 You often get taken advantage of.
 You are afraid of leaving your home.
 You do not understand what's written in handouts from your children's school.



When you are literate...
 You have access to more information.
 You can manage your home and business better.
 You feel confident in the community.

Help empower women with literacy!

SMILE project in Cambodia has been supported by generous donations from individuals and corporations. Your kind contributions help us support women in Asia and the Pacific. Donate now!

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 Account No. 096-3000914
 Account Holder Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO

The Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) is a non-profit organisation established in 1971, for regional activities in Asia and the Pacific. Operating in line with UNESCO principles, it works for the promotion of mutual understanding and cultural cooperation among peoples in the region. In close collaboration with UNESCO and partner NGOs in Asia and the Pacific, ACCU has pioneered various regional cooperative programmes in the fields of culture and education, with the shared goal of building a sustainable future.

About ACCU

The Cambodian Women's Development Association (CWDA), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in 1993, grew out of the dissolved Phnom Penh Municipality Women's Association. CWDA aims to enhance the capacity of women in Cambodia through empowerment, access to education, and through the provision of health services and sanctuary for those at risk.

About CWDA



Literacy class



Life skill activities



Gift package



Reading corner



SMILE ASIA
in Cambodia

Quality of Life and Happiness for Women and Children



From the 1970s until peace efforts began in early 1990s, Cambodia suffered decades of political insurgency and civil war. During this period, social and economic infrastructure widely deteriorated, and the education sector suffered devastating damage in terms of human resources, which had a long-term negative impact on its subsequent reconstruction.

According to UNESCO, there are approximately 2.4 million adults in Cambodia who have been deprived of access to basic education and, as a result, still, lack basic reading and writing skills. About 70% of these illiterate persons are women*. The latest statistics also show that 12.7% of women between the ages of 15 and 24, and 22.6% between 35 and 44, never attended school**. Meanwhile, there is significant evidence from around the world to prove that parents, especially mothers, greatly influence educational and health conditions of their children.

It is expected, therefore, that improvements in women's literacy will lead to improvements in the education and health of their children and family members, as well as those of future generations.

“SMILE”

Supporting
Maternal and Child Health
Improvement and Building
Literate
Environment



What is the SMILE Asia Project?

The SMILE Asia Project aims at empowering women, especially mothers-to-be and women caring for small children, by enhancing literacy, health care knowledge and life skills, and by supporting them in creating an environment that promotes education and health both at home and in the community. The project, which began in 2008 in Cambodia, had reached out to more than 1,220 women in 55 villages by 2017.

SMILE made our women healthier and stronger

Facilitator of SMILE 2016/17 and Chief of Village

I had to stop my education during the ninth grade because of the civil war. Even in times of hardship, I never gave up studying and continued learning in an informal manner, sometimes at night by candlelight. I am now in my second year as a SMILE facilitator, and I feel much more confident about my teaching. As chief of the village, I am very proud of my learners who practice at home what they have learnt at SMILE. Thanks to SMILE, our women are healthier and stronger.



Ms. Pen Yeun
58 years old

I now perform social work for the village

Being illiterate, I have faced many problems in my daily life as a housewife taking care of my family. When I found out about SMILE, I was very happy and immediately decided to join. This year, my peer learners selected me as a lead assistant to our facilitator (literacy teacher). I am responsible for collecting learners before each class, organising meetings, and maintaining the hygiene in the learning environment. My family, including my husband and mother, is very happy for me, and they support my studies. I thank SMILE for this amazing opportunity to develop my capacity and to perform social work for the village.



Ms. Choun Pov
39 years old
Mother of four children

SMILE helped me realize the importance of education

After SMILE closed in my village, I found it very challenging to continue learning, as the volume of reading materials available at that time were very limited. However, I made daily efforts to keep up with what I had learnt and also to expand my business. After joining the SMILE class, I become aware of the importance of education and encouraged my daughter to study at a public school. She is currently in grade ten. My wish now is that the SMILE class reopens in my village so that I can continue to make progress with my learning.



Ms. Kim Soeun
39 years old
Mother of two children

I am now a successful entrepreneur

I dropped out of school during the third grade to help my parents work, and I did not learn to read and write until I joined the SMILE class almost twenty years later. While I was at SMILE, I read all the books in the reading corner to increase my knowledge and learnt how to make preserved food such as fish, cheese and sour cabbage. With these techniques, I started selling my products to the neighbours. This grew into a small business in the village market, and later into a wholesale business supplying markets in Phnom Penh. Now I can even afford to send my children to private school. My literacy skills have also helped me read and write invoices, as well as do accounts. My deepest thanks to SMILE for giving me this opportunity and making my family happy.



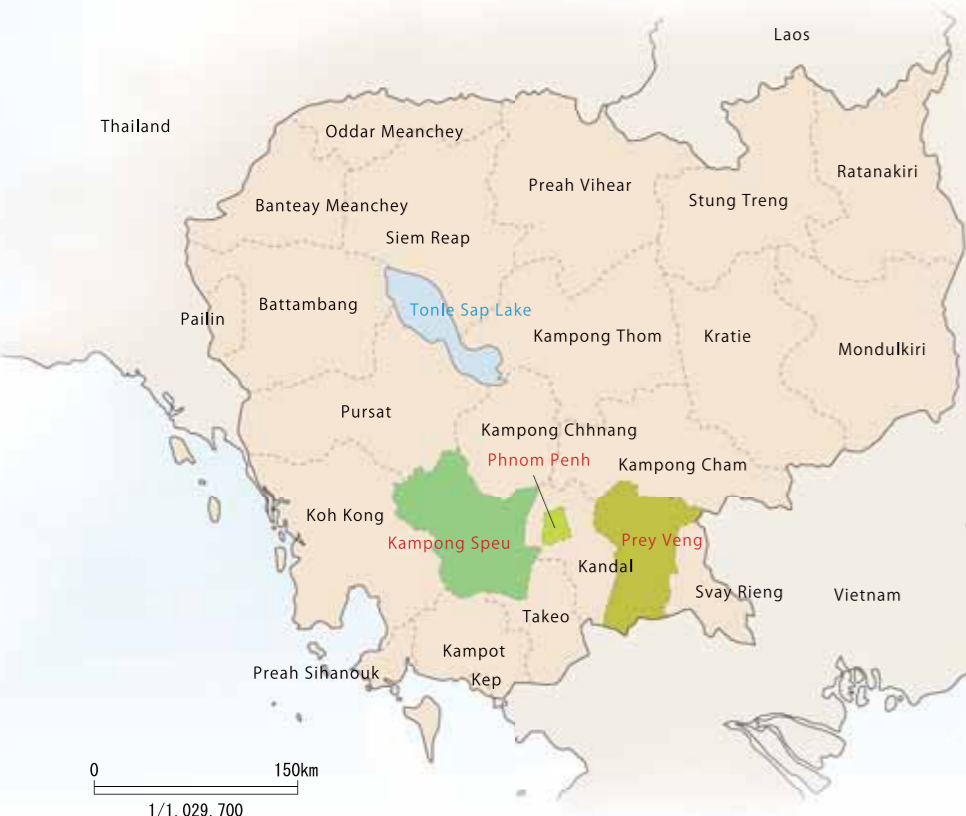
Ms. El Aticass
37 years old
Mother of two children



Mother's smile changes the family and community



SMILE contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being).



SMILE villages in Cambodia
 ... 13 villages
 ... 38 villages
 ... 4 villages



Basic Information

- Total population : 15.4 million (2015)
- GDP per capita : USD 1,036 (2013)
- Gross primary school enrolment rate : 119.2% (2013)
- Net primary school enrolment rate : 97.3% (2013)
- Youth literacy rates (15-24) : female 92.6% male 91.9% (2015)
- Adult literacy rates (15 years and above) : female 75.0% male 86.5% (2015)
- Maternal mortality rate : 206 per 100,000 live births (2013)
- Under 5 years mortality rate : 54 per 1,000 live births (2013)

* UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (Database accessed in September 2017) The latest available data for Cambodia is for 2009.
 ** National Institute of Statistics. (2016). *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2015*. Ministry of Planning. (2014). *National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018*.

