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# Thesis

## Education and learning opportunities in rural areas

Supporting Quality Education in Cambodia

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Youth Work and Civic Activities  
(210 ECTS)

Date of submission for evaluation  
(12/2018)



HUMANISTINEN  
AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

## ABSTRACT

Humak University of Applied Sciences  
Youth Work and Civic Activities

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Title of thesis: Education and learning opportunities in rural areas – Supporting Quality Education in Cambodia

Number of pages: 40 and 5 pages of appendices

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The purpose of this bachelor's thesis was to develop AIESEC's projects in less developed areas in Cambodia. The aim was to study the quality of education and learning opportunities in Prolay commune. In addition the aim was to study the educational impact of AIESEC's project Orkun on the children and youth in Prolay commune. The study was conducted in Prolay commune, Kampong Thom province, Cambodia in summer 2018. The subjects of the research were children and young people who were attending the local youth club and a public primary school in Prolay commune. The study was conducted during AIESEC's project Orkun. This thesis focuses on following issues: 1. How are the five focus points of SDG 4 realized in public primary school in Prolay commune? 2. What kind of educational impacts has project ORKUN offered to the students? 3. How does the future of children in Prolay commune look like? 4. What issues should AIESEC pay attention to when working in rural areas in Cambodia?

The research methods that were used to collect data were theme interviews, a visual activity and observations. The results were analysed by using content analysis methods.

The research showed that the children and young people in Prolay commune need more learning opportunities and support for their education. Education is equitable, inclusive and equal in Prolay commune public primary school yet many children especially from poor families are left without an education. The children in Prolay commune need more information about the benefits of education and about current issues in the world. Project Orkun is able to provide more learning opportunities and for children in rural areas and support quality education.

The study concludes that AIESEC's projects can support quality education and provide more learning opportunities in rural areas in Cambodia.

The result of the thesis is a development proposal for AIESEC. Based on the proposal the organisation can further develop their work in rural areas in Cambodia.

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Keywords: education, children, development, Cambodia, sustainable development, volunteer work

## TIIVISTELMÄ

Humanistinen ammattikorkeakoulu  
Nuorisotyön ja kansalaistoiminnan koulutusohjelma

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Tekijät: Henriika Lassinharju

Opinnäytetyön nimi: Koulutus ja oppimismahdollisuudet maaseutu alueilla – Laadukasta koulutusta tukemassa Kambodzassa

Sivumäärä: 40 ja 5 liitesivua

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena on kehittää kansalaisjärjestö AIESECin projektitoimintaa vähemmän kehittyneissä yhteisöissä Kambodzassa. Tavoitteena oli tutkia koulutuksen laatua ja oppimismahdollisuuksia maalaisalueilla sekä AIESECin Orkun projektiin koulutuksellisia vaikutuksia Prolayn kunnan lapsiin ja nuoriin. Tutkimus toteutettiin Prolay nimisessä kunnassa, Kambodzan Kampong Thom provinssissa kesällä 2018. Tutkimuskohteina olivat paikallisen nuorisotalon lapset ja nuoret, jotka käyvät julkista alakoulua Prolayn kunnassa. Tutkimus toteutettiin AIESECin Orkun nimisessä vapaaehtoisprojektissa. Tässä tutkimuksessa kerättiin vastauksia kysymyksiin 1) Millä tavoin Kestävän Kehityksen Tavoitteen 4 viisi painopistettä toteutuu julkisessa alakoulussa Prolayn kunnassa? 2) Millaisia koulutuksellisia vaikutuksia Orkun projekti on tarjonnut oppilaille? 3) Miltä näyttää lasten tulevaisuus Prolayn kunnassa? 4) Mihin seikkoihin AIESECin tulisi kiinnittää huomiota tehdessään työtä vähemmän kehittyneissä yhteisöissä?

Tutkimusmenetelminä käytettiin teemahaastatteluja, visuaalista kyselymenetelmää sekä havainnointeja. Tulokset analysoitiin sisällönanalyysimenetelmiä käyttäen.

Tutkimus osoitti, että Prolayn kunnan lapset ja nuoret tarvitsevat lisää oppimismahdollisuuksia ja tukea heidän koulutukseensa. Prolayn kunnan julkinen koulu mahdollistaa oikeudenmukaisen, osallistavan ja tasa-arvoisen koulutuksen, mutta silti monet, etenkin köyhistä perheistä tulevat lapset, jäävät ilman koulutusta. Prolayn kunnan lapset tarvitsevat lisää tietoa koulutuksen hyödyistä sekä ajankohtaisista maailman asioista. Orkun projekti pystyy tarjoamaan lisää oppimismahdollisuuksia maalaisalueiden lapsille sekä tukemaan laadukasta koulutusta.

Tutkimuksen johtopäätöksenä on, että AIESECin projekteilla voidaan tukea laadukasta koulutusta sekä tarjota lisää oppimismahdollisuuksia maalaisalueilla Kambodzassa.

Opinnäytetyön tuotoksena on kehitysehdotelma AIESECille. Ehdotelman pohjalta voidaan kehittää järjestön työtä projekteissa maalaisalueilla Kambodzassa.

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Asiasanat: koulutus, lapset, kehitys, Kambodza, kestävä kehitys, vapaaehtoistyö

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Education is considered a fundamental human right, yet there are millions of children and adults, especially girls and women, who are not getting any level of education because of economic, social or other cultural factors (UNESCO 2018). In our World, there are critical concerns about the challenges of sustainable development. Poverty, climate change and gender inequality are few of those major challenges that especially developing countries are facing. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), education is one of the most powerful tools that can tackle these issues and help empower people to participate fully in the society (UNESCO 2018). Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was established by United Nations in 2015 with 17 goals and 169 targets (United Nations 2015). These goals were set to continue from where Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) left off and reach what they failed to achieve. The ambitious vision of Agenda 2030 is to end poverty and ensure healthy and safe living conditions where people can live without fear of violence. A world where everyone has access to equitable and quality education, healthcare and social protection. Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG 4) in Agenda 2030 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (United Nations 2015.)

Cambodia has suffered from a brutal history of war and genocide that ended no longer than 40 years ago. In 1975 the Khmer Rouge regime took power over people and killed over 22% of the population. Their goal was to change the country's ideology away from the Western culture's ideals. Most of the victims were professionals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers or other well-read people. (Schlund-Vials 2012, 1-3.) These events have affected and are still affecting to the welfare and economy of the country making Cambodia one of the poorest countries in the World. Poverty and lack of job opportunities forces people in Cambodia to move to neighbouring countries leaving children without an education.

United Nation's youth organisation AIESEC works in Cambodia to promote the Sustainable Development goal 4 in their projects. AIESEC aims to build cross-cultural understanding by sending young people to volunteer in different projects and develop

their leadership skills (Farhati 2018). Together with a local partner organisation Youth Star Cambodia they are supporting poor communities in Cambodia to reach better quality of education. In July 2018 I volunteered in project Orkun – Educating the Community, later referred as project Orkun. Going to my final year as a community educator student I needed to choose a suitable place to complete final internship. Being a travel enthusiast and having the strong desire to help children in less developed countries I found that project Orkun would be a perfect fit. As a global volunteer from AIESEC I could combine traveling and doing something worthy while developing my skills as a community educator. I reached out to AIESEC in Finland and informed them about my interests to volunteer in Cambodia and asked whether they would be interested in subscribing my thesis. Luckily the local AIESEC in Finland found the idea of development task to be something that would not only benefit them but also the local AIESEC in Cambodia. Together with my supervisor from AIESEC Finland we brainstormed what would be the outcome of the thesis and how it could help the organization. Even though there are not many similar researches in Cambodia and finding the required amount of knowledge-based background information was a challenge, I decided to take a leap and conduct my research-based thesis in project Orkun. Moreover, with the help of my research, I could further develop AIESEC's work in Cambodia.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” declared Nelson Mandela once himself. The same ideology is cross-cutting through the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Not only has education its own focused goal to increase the quality of education, but it can also be used as a tool to reach all the other 17 goals for sustainability. Universal Declaration for Human rights article 26 declares that all people have the right to education (United Nations 2018). Cambodia is in desperate need for action to increase the level and quality of education and number of graduates to meet the standards of human rights. If the country will be able to reach the SDG 4 by 2030 Cambodian youth will have access to better jobs which can lead to higher economic levels and people's wellbeing.

Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education is one of the focuses in project Orkun. The project aims to support quality education and provide more learning opportunities in rural areas. (AIESEC Cambodia 2017, 9-10.) Volunteers from partner organisation Youth Star and AIESEC work together in poor communities by teaching

in local youth clubs, schools and help facilitating in other community activities. I was placed in a commune called Prolay in Kampong Thom province where I worked as a global volunteer for five weeks. I worked with another volunteer from AIESEC in Vietnam and two local volunteers from Youth Star Cambodia. I lived with a local family and taught English to children in local youth club and in a public primary school. Project Orkun gave me the opportunity to experience the day to day life in rural areas in Cambodia and to learn about the culture and history of the country. It also gave me a great opportunity to put my skills as a community educator into practice.

The purpose of this research is to look deeper into following issues 1. How are the five focus points of SDG 4 realized in public primary school in Prolay commune? 2. What kind of educational impacts has project ORKUN offered to the students? 3. How does the future of children in Prolay commune look like? 4. What issues should AIESEC pay attention to when working in rural areas in Cambodia? The research is conducted in Cambodia, Kampong Thom province in Prolay commune.

### 1.1 AIESEC - a Youth Leadership Movement

AIESEC is a non-political, independent, not-for-profit organisation run by students and recent graduates. The youth-run organisation is a platform for young people who are interested in world issues, leadership development and who strives to improve themselves and communities around them. Cultural understanding and experiential learning are one of the main objectives of the organisation. AIESEC is recognized by UNESCO and is in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is affiliated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (UN DPI) and member of International Coordinating Meeting of Youth Organisations (ICMYO). The organisation was established in 1948 after World War II by young people from different countries and now works in 126 countries. (Farhati 2018.)

AIESEC has a large variety of projects from which young people can choose to volunteer. Volunteering in a foreign country can be a challenging but rewarding experience by which one can develop their personal skills and become a world citizen. I have always considered myself as a person who wants to know about other cultures and

countries that are less developed and help people in need. Studying civic activities and youth work have raised questions and strong desire to learn more about issues in the world, especially in developing countries. Through AIESEC I could find a suitable project for a final internship and furthermore conduct a research for my bachelor's thesis. The reason for choosing AIESEC is that I could relate to the young minded community, which is driven and passionate about creating a better world that is sustainable, inclusive and equal.

## 1.2 Project Orkun – Educating the Community

AIESEC Cambodia and its local partner organisation Youth Star Cambodia works together in project Orkun. Youth Star Cambodia is a local organisation that works to provide more learning opportunities for children and youth in rural areas in Cambodia (Youth Star Cambodia 2018). The project aims at promoting Sustainable Development Goal 4 Quality Education. Global volunteers from AIESEC will teach English to children and live with a local family experiencing the day to day life. 'Educating the Community' is one of three projects in the National Project also known as project Orkun. 'Educating the Schools' and 'Educating the Community' aims at promoting SDG goal 4, Quality Education while 'Educating about Environment' promotes the SDG goal 13, Climate Action'. (AIESEC Cambodia 2017, 9-11.) When speaking about project Orkun in this thesis I will refer only to Educating the Community since I have conducted the research and volunteered in this project.

In Project Orkun global volunteers from AIESEC help the volunteers of Youth Star Cambodia in lesson planning and teaching English to children in a local youth club and public primary school. Global volunteers work closely with the local volunteers helping them in lesson planning, teaching and facilitating their activities. This project especially caught my eye because it is exactly something that I wish to do after graduation. My goal is to work in projects that will develop communities and people's well-being in less developed countries, which is also what project Orkun wishes to do in Cambodia.

### 1.3 Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development – Goal 4 ‘Quality Education’

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was adopted by United Nations and all its Member States in 2015. The Agenda 2030 includes 17 goals that were set to tackle issues such as poverty, climate change and equality. The mission is to continue where Millenium Development Goals left off and continue the work to change the world to be sustainable and just for all. Agenda 2030 has 17 goals and 169 targets out of which goal 4 ‘Quality education’ (SDG 4) is one. The purpose of the goal 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (United Nations 2015.) SDG 4 is also one of the focuses in Project Orkun.

## 2 BACKGROUND

As a teenager I read an article about orphans in Cambodia who were kidnapped and trafficked to work in child brothels. An organisation, now whose name I can’t recall, worked their best to try and rescue these children and provide a better life for them. This article has stayed with me for all these years and is one of the reasons I became interested in Cambodian culture and its cruel history. The same article has later influenced the career path I’m currently following. To have a better view of why Cambodia is considered as a developing country and why the country is facing such challenges in economic growth, education system and wellbeing, I will give a quick overview of Cambodia’s history and present.

### 2.1 Facts about Cambodia

Cambodia is situated in southeast Asia bordered by Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Gulf of Thailand. The total area is 181 035 square kilometres with estimated population of 16,25 million. Density of the country is 89 people per square kilometre. The capital and the largest city of Cambodia is Phnom Penh with population of 1.4 million. Other large cities by population are also Takeo, Sihanoukville, Battambang and Siem Reap

all of them having 140 000-840 000 inhabitants. Most of the people are native Khmer (96,7%) when the minority of people consist of Cham, Chinese, Vietnamese and other ethnic groups. 95% of the people practices Theravada Buddhism and the minority are mainly Islamic. (World Population Review 2018.) The native language of Cambodia is Khmer. The Kingdom of Cambodia is governed by Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy. The weather is mainly hot and humid under the monsoons over the rainy season. Summer time the weather can rise even up to 35 celsius. (World Atlas 2015.)

## 2.2 Brief History

Cambodia has gone through hundreds of years of war and conflicts. Ever since 1599 there has been a conflict or a war that has shocked the country. The Kingdom was established as French colony in mid-1800 which lasted until 1949. (Dommen 2002, 1&198.) The nightmare was only about to start when Khmer Rouge regime took power over people in 1975 killing over 1.7 million people. The aim of the regime was to start the calendar from year zero all over again. The main purpose of the regime was to resist western ideals and force people to move to countryside in labour camps. The regime killed cold bloodedly most of the well-educated people such as doctors, teachers and lawyers. Many fled to neighbouring countries but most stayed and faced the horrors of famine, torture, execution and disease. The genocide that took lives of over 22% of the population ended after three years in 1979. (Schlund-Vials 2012, 1-3.) After almost 40 years the events of the nightmare are still affecting the lives of Cambodian people, youth and future generations.

## 2.3 After the horror – building a new education system

When Khmer Rouge regime tared everything apart and took down the educational and economic system, the only thing left was ruins of people who had gone through hell, buildings that reminds a place of horror and a system that needed to be rebuild

only to be stronger than it ever was. Poverty is one of the main reasons why people in Cambodia are still left without proper level of education.

Because of Cambodia's violent history of war and genocide where all well-read people were killed by Khmer Rouge regime the country is facing many problems in the educational system and economic growth. These events are still affecting people in their day to day life and their future. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development report 2016 Cambodia is in a lower medium rank in human development and between 188 countries it is in place 143 just before Nepal and Myanmar (2016, 200). Future of Cambodia and the well-being of people lies in the hands of future generations.

Education in primary and secondary levels in Cambodia is free for everyone. Cambodian Education Law states in the article 15 that education in the country is both public and private. According to article 17 general education is considered to include 9 years of studies in primary and secondary education. According to article 23 the education program is considered compulsory. It also states that the program should provide education for peace, sustainable development, morality and respect of other cultures and cultural traditions. (Education Law 2007.) The legislation shows that Cambodia is on its way to build a strong new education system. In order to increase the nation's economic level and well-being of people, education is the most important tool to make it happen.

#### 2.4 School system in Prolay commune

Prolay commune, where I conducted my research in public primary school, is in Kampong Thom province. While living in the village I was able to get personal experience about the school system in the commune. The following information has been given by one of the key informants the school director in the public primary school where I worked as a volunteer. Education is free for all students in the province in primary and secondary level. There are three public primary schools in the district where Prolay commune is located. The public primary school in Prolay commune has over 800 students and almost half of them females. The nearest high school is far

away from the village which means that the students will need to travel by motorbike or one hour by bicycle. The commune doesn't have a University and the closest University is in the centre of the province which is many hours away from the village. The University also has a tuition fee. According to the school director many students will not continue to higher education because families don't have money to pay the school or the distances are too long.

In 2017 there was 478 primary schools in Kampong Thom province with total of 100 891 students enrolled. Almost half of them were girls. In these over 400 schools there are 2363 teachers over half of them being females. There are 91 secondary schools with 40 337 students enrolled in Kampong Thom province (Ministry of Education Youth and Sport 2017, 4&8).

### 3 THE KNOWLEDGE BASED FRAMEWORK

The main purpose of this thesis is to give AIESEC new ideas how to develop their projects in developing countries such as Cambodia. When it comes to development process the researcher needs a good and reliable knowledge base to support the research. I have chosen to use the five focus points for Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education as one of the frameworks for my research. The five focus points sets the standards for quality education in Agenda 2030. I will use the focus points as a framework to look deeper into the issues of what should be taken in consideration when working in educational projects in Cambodia. The focus points will frame the discussion of part one in the research; Quality of Education in Prolay commune public primary school.

In this research, I will also focus on what are the educational impacts project Orkun has on the students and the community. I have chosen to use the objectives for project Orkun planted by AIESEC Cambodia to discuss about the achievements of the project in Prolay commune. I will also use the objectives to discuss about the future of children in the commune.

To support the framework, I will use a presentation from Global Education Monitoring report 2016 workshop held in Cambodia to look deeper into educational issues, guidelines and recommendations in Cambodia.

### 3.1 Five focus points for SDG 4 – Quality Education

New vision for Education 2030 was adopted by UNESCO in Incheon, Republic of Korea where the World Education Forum 2015 (WEF 2015) took place. Together with United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNDP, UN Women and the World Bank, UNESCO and all the participants in WEF 2015 signed the declaration. The participants declared that the focus in efforts of promoting quality education should be access, equity and inclusion, gender equality, quality and lifelong learning opportunities for all. These five focus points are the foundation for Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education in purpose of which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (Incheon Declaration 2015, 5-7.)

The five focus points for SDG 4 are illustrated in Figure 1. The first focus point is access to education. It is encouraged by UNESCO and all the participants in WEF 2015 that all countries should provide 12 years of free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education of which nine years needs to be compulsory. Actions should be taken to ensure that all children and adolescents are learning and have meaningful education and training opportunities. The second focus point is equity and inclusion. The purpose of SDG 4 is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. 'No one is left behind'- policy ensures that there will be no room for exclusion or marginalization in education and it should be accessible to everyone. The third focus point is gender equality. To achieve the SDG 4, it is important to support gender-sensitive policies and learning environments. Gender issues should be mainstreamed in teacher training and curriculum. All gender-based discrimination and violence should be eliminated in schools. The fourth point focuses on gender equality. It is essential for quality education that all teachers are professionally qualified, well-trained, empowered and motivated. Quality education aims to improve learning out-

comes which requires actions to be made in strengthening evaluation systems and processes as well as build mechanisms to measure progress. The last and the fifth point for SDG 4 focuses on lifelong learning opportunities. Education 2030 commits to ensure lifelong learning opportunities for all. This includes that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, have access to quality vocational and technical education and that they achieve relevant level of literacy, numeracy and life skills. (Incheon Declaration 2015, 7-8.)

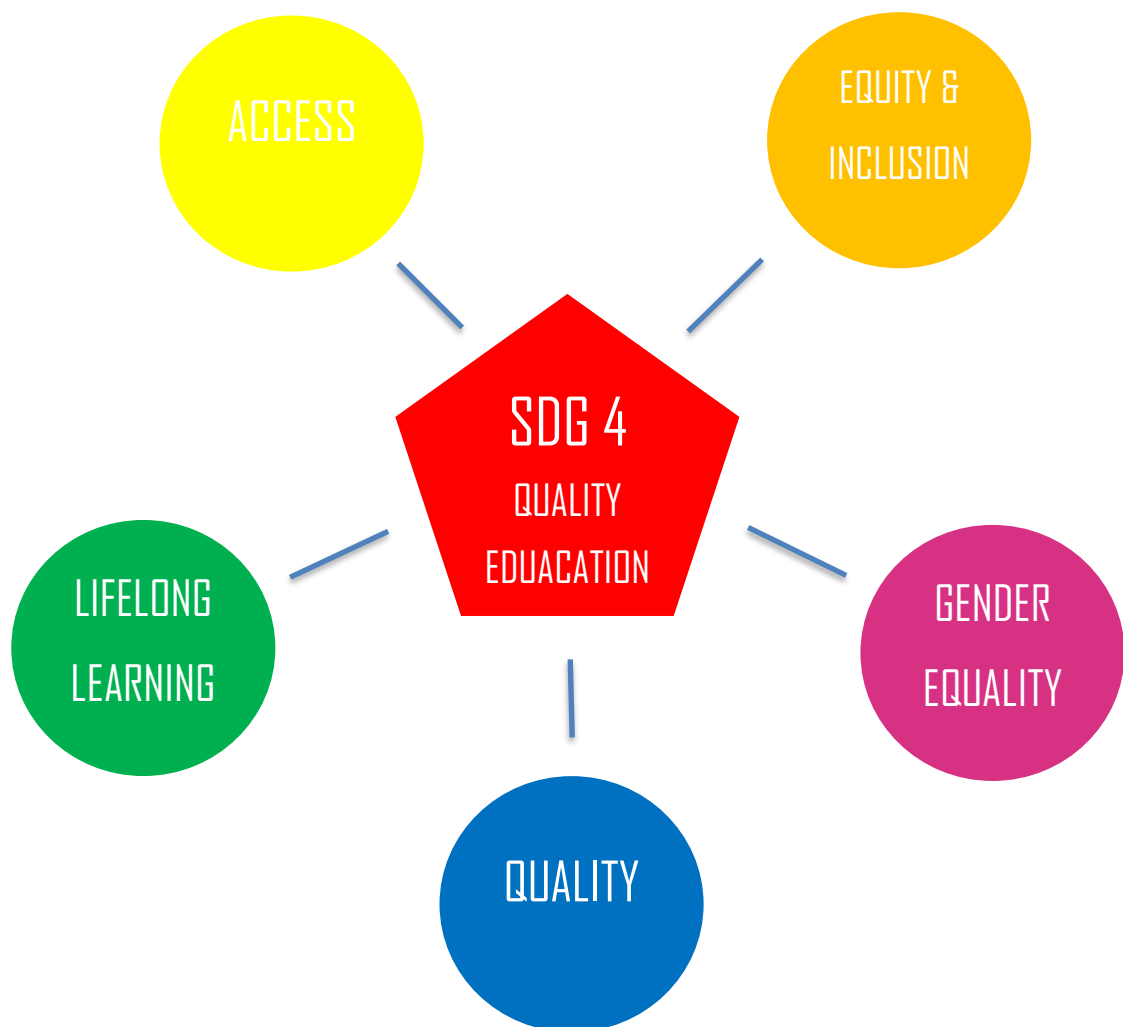


FIGURE 1. The five focus points for SDG 4.

I will use these five focus points for SDG 4 to discuss about the learning possibilities and the quality of education in public primary school in Prolay commune.

### 3.2 The objectives for Project Orkun

The project Orkun aim is to provide more learning opportunities for Cambodian children and support local volunteers in rural communities. The main objectives are that by the end of the project Cambodian children will have better cross-cultural understanding and they have improved their English. The children will have increased faith in themselves and their abilities to change their lives and the world. (AIESEC Cambodia 2017, 9-10.)

These objectives will help frame the discussion about what kind of educational impacts the project has offered to the students. The objectives will also support the conversation about the future of children in Prolay commune. I will use the objectives when pondering what issues AIESEC should pay attention to in future projects.

### 3.3 Issues in primary and secondary education in Cambodia

Global Education Monitoring report (GEMR 2016) SDG 4 workshop for Cambodia was held in Phnom Penh in November 2016. The purpose of the workshop was to present the indicator framework and monitoring issues for SDG 4 in Cambodia. SDG 4 has all together 43 indicators; 11 obligatory are proposed by Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) and 32 optional indicators are suggested by Technical Cooperation Group (TCG). The 43 indicators are signed for the eleven SDG 4 targets whereas critical issues and suggestions are also discussed in the workshop. (GEMR Cambodia workshop 2016.)

The GEMR Cambodia workshop 2016 presents that there is no data found in Cambodia that tells how many students have reached the minimum level of proficiency in primary and lower secondary education. Cambodia has yet to define what is the minimum level of proficiency in primary and lower secondary education. According to

the presentation in the workshop 72% of Cambodian people have completed primary education, 41% lower secondary education and 21% upper secondary education in 2014. There are almost as many females enrolled in organized learning. The presentation in the workshop shows that there is an evident inequality between children that come from economically different backgrounds; while 88% of the richest children have completed primary education in 2014 only 40% of the poorest children have completed theirs. In the GEMR Cambodia workshop it is explained that in 2009 there was 36% of adults age 25+ who had completed primary education, 16% had completed lower secondary education and only 6% upper secondary education. This indicator can be indirectly used to show the competency for work and skills of people in Cambodia. (GEMR Cambodia workshop 2016.)

To build the capacity for quality education it is recommended that Cambodia will have to find inequalities in the education system and establish monitoring systems to follow the progress of learning outcomes. They should focus on improving curricula and textbooks, establish fuller range of lifelong learning opportunities, have cooperation between organizations and share best practices. Lastly it is suggested that Cambodia should use national education accounts to improve the educational system. (GEMR Cambodia workshop 2016.)

#### 4 RESEARCH

I have chosen to use three different methods to conduct my research. To learn about the quality of education in Prolay commune I will interview the school director of the public primary school where I worked as a volunteer. The reason why I will use a theme interview is to find more information about the school system, education program and what learning possibilities students have in the village. I will also use another theme interview to learn about the educational impacts and achievements of project Orkun. The interviews are essential for the thesis outcome which is to create a proposal for AIESEC to further develop their work in such projects. The key informants are the two local volunteers from Youth Star Cambodia. They taught in the local youth club but also worked closely with me in the project Orkun facilitating during lessons.

When I started the project, I knew I wanted to have children's voice to be heard in my thesis. I wanted to learn what they would get from the project and if it had any impacts on them. I was also interested to learn where they would see themselves in the future and what did they know that could be possible for them. For this reason, I chose to conduct a visual activity for the children in the local youth club where I worked daily for the five weeks in the village. The papers where the students had written or drawn their answers to got lost during my travels back from Cambodia, but fortunately I had already written the results to my computer.

Working and living in the community gave me the opportunity to make personal observations about the day to day life and the educational system in Prolay commune. I was able to observe the students in their natural habitat and live the life they are living for five weeks experiencing the same routines that the locals do every day. These observations can help support the results from theme interviews and the visual activity, but also give a personal point of view to the issues that should be tackled in order to improve the quality education in Cambodia.

In this study, I will focus on the following questions 1. How are the five focus points of SDG 4 realized in public primary school in Prolay commune? 2. What kind of educational impacts has project ORKUN offered to the students? 3. How does the future of children in Prolay commune look like? 4. What issues should AIESEC pay attention to when working in rural areas in Cambodia?

#### 4.1 Development task and aim of the study

The aim of this thesis is to study the quality of education and learning opportunities in Prolay commune. In addition, the aim is to study the educational impacts of project Orkun on the children and youth in Prolay commune. Purpose of a development work is to look at the what has already been done and consider what can be done even better. The aim of this study is to further develop the organisation's work in rural areas in Cambodia. The development proposal can be used as a tool when working in projects such as project Orkun. It will include development ideas for the local AIESEC in Cambodia and what they can do to improve their projects. The proposal is an action plan for the exchange participants who will volunteer in projects with

AIIESEC. The action plan will provide suggestion for what should be made to support quality education in rural areas. I will create the proposal based on the results of the study from the point of view of quality education.

## 4.2 Methodology

Interview is a great way to collect data about less known phenomenon and issues which are subjects of development. Through an interview you can look at the subject of the study more closely. It can also give you the opportunity to study even more sensitive issues. Interviews always involve interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee which is why it is best to make the situation as comfortable as possible. Data acquisition should be made in confidentially and the interviewee should be openly informed what is the purpose of the development work. The interviewer should consider cultural background, a correct use of language and the environment when preparing the interview. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 95-97.)

A deeper insight into the research topic can be given by a theme interview. This type of interview is created around themes that the researcher is looking answers to. Even though there should be specific questions under the themes the interviewer can look for new topics that might come up during the conversation. The researcher should carefully review recurring themes that will rise in the interview and consider the connection between them. Otherwise the analyse might end up being too shallow. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 98-100.)

I have chosen to use theme interviews to get a closer look into the quality of education in Prolay commune public primary school and to learn about the educational impacts and achievements of project Orkun. Theme interviews can bring new information about the quality of education and issues that need development. The key informants in theme interviews are the school director in Prolay commune public primary school and two local volunteers from Youth Star Cambodia.

Visual activity was selected as another method to collect data. I wanted the children's voice to be heard in this thesis, but I struggled how I could get reliable information from children who doesn't speak the same language as me nor understand English

well. Visual activity seemed to be the best option for the task with the help of local volunteers. The confidentiality of the results can be considered questionable because the method itself needs creative analysis and it is not as common as interviews or questionnaires. The visual activity was conducted as a mixture of a group interview and a questionnaire whereas the visual part makes the method more approachable for the children. What made the method visual was that some of the questions had pictures to clarify them and make them more understandable. Children were able to answer the questions either by drawing a picture and/or by writing the answers by their own language in Khmer. I will explain more about the process in chapter 4.5.

Observations can be useful in development tasks when the aim is to study behaviour or people's interaction. When observations are made in natural surroundings of the subject of the study it gives the possibility to look at the results more critically, but they can also be used to support the results. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 103.) Living and experiencing the day to day life in the community gave me a perfect opportunity to make personal observations during the project. I can use the data collected throughout the process to reflect on the results got from theme interviews and the visual activity.

### 4.3 Target group

The focus in this research will be on the students going in the local youth club since they are the ones who I was teaching more than other students in the community. I will also be observing the children and young people going in Prolay commune public primary school. However, because there are over 800 students in the school the target group will be the students in the youth club. There is no clear number of how many students are going to the youth club but according to one of the local volunteers from Youth Star, there are proximately 50 students from grade 3 to 6, aged 8-16.

The key informant for the first theme interview is the public primary school director. The director has the best knowledge about the educational system and situation in the commune and can answer the questions about how the five focus points are realized in their school. Other key informants are the local volunteers from Youth Star

Cambodia working in the local youth club. They saw the progress of project Orkun since they were working closely with us global volunteers from AIESEC and the children going in the youth club.

#### 4.4 Ethicality and credibility

When doing a study for a development work it is important for the researcher to remember the ethics of research. The subjects of research need to be informed about the aim of the study, what is their role in the study and what the researcher is doing and why. In order to avoid presenting dishonest information, the researcher must follow honesty with the subject being studied and ask for a permission. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 48-49.) In this study I made an oral agreement with the people taking part in the research. On behalf of the subscriber there was no need to make any additional research agreements or have the people sign any forms. Everyone who took part in this research were informed what I, as a researcher, was doing and why, what would the research be about and what are the aims of the study. They were explained that any names or other recognisable characteristics will not be published. The examinees were also informed that they didn't have to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable or may they have had any other reasons.

The study included some factors that will affect on the credibility of the results. Language barrier between me and the examinees brings disadvantages already in the research phase as the results are based on the information produced by people. Misunderstandings in communication might have happened which would affect on the results. Thus, can the language barrier be a reliability factor later on when analysing the results and making the proposal for AIESEC. Another factor which can affect on the credibility is that when making the visual activity with the students, there were many of them in the same space at the same time. There was also another adult, a local volunteer, in the room helping with translations. Having said that it can be possible that the children felt obligated to answer in a way that pleases me or they might have wanted to answer the same way as the friend next to them. The children were all ex-

plained that they should answer as thoroughly as they could, truthfully and independently.

#### 4.5 Data collection

Working in the project Orkun gave me a great advantage to see and experience the subject being developed with my own eyes. For the purpose of increasing the reliability and to explain about the research process, I will describe more about the experience in project Orkun. The project lasted for six weeks in total by five of them living and working in the community. The original assignment was to spend six weeks in the community. Cambodia had general election campaigns going on during the first week. For security reasons and applying for a permit to enter Kampong Thom province took longer than expected we missed the first week in the community. Finally, after one week of waiting and preparing for the project me and my co-volunteer were able to enter the province and start the work we were there to do. Although we had the time to prepare we didn't know what to expect. Two workers from partner organization Youth Star escorted us to the community and took us first to the public primary school where we would be working during the project. To paint a picture of the actual experience in the project I will include few parts from my observations. Here's a glimpse where I will describe the first moments of arrival.

*“When we first arrived the school, the children were very curious about us. I learned from one of the teachers that they had never seen a foreigner before. It took only few minutes and they all had gathered around us to hear what we had to say. Even though they didn't understand anything, they seemed to like our company and wanted to know why we were there. The teachers told them that we are there to teach them English, so they got very excited. “*

As we prepared to teach the first day at the youth club, we were also adjusting to the new living conditions. I knew coming in that the conditions would not be the same as what I've used to in Finland, but it was still bit of a shock how primitive everything was. A teacher from the primary school hosted us during the project and we lived

with her family in a very traditional Cambodian house that you can see in rural areas. It was a family of six who all lived in the wooden house that was only one big room. There was one queen-sized bed where me, the other volunteer and our host would sleep in. All the others slept on the floor or in a hammock. The family, much like every other Cambodian family, had farm animals such as chickens, a rooster, a cow, a pig and few additional stray dogs. The house was surrounded by different type of palm trees and the backyard had an orange tree where we could pick an orange when ever we wanted. The family provided us with food and amenities. I will describe the living conditions in the community in the following.

*“The living in the village is very poor and primitive. In the house where we live is only two beds and a mattress in the wooden house plus two hammocks and 6 people living in there. We share a bed with our host sister – three people in total. There’s not a lot of light and the streets are pitch black in the evenings. Food here is okay but hygiene is a concern. The kitchen is a hut outside the house and they cook everything on the fire. Dishes are washed with the water from the well. There is an outside toilet with a squat toilet and a big bath full of water from the well. It took us two-three days to get used to the environment. “*

We taught English in the local youth club six days a week every morning and in the afternoon. Thursdays and Saturdays, we taught in primary school for one or two hours depending on the week and on Wednesday after school we taught English to the teachers. The students in the school were divided into two groups because there were so many students and not enough teachers. The other half had school in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. The groups switched every other week so that the next week the afternoon group would start in the morning. All the students going to the youth club were students from the school. That meant that the schedule for teaching would also change every week since the classes were formed so that the students can come in when they were not at school. Local volunteers helped facilitating the classes and translating when ever needed. Most of the students didn’t have any textbooks where to learn from so we had to use other methods to teach English. The club had a white board and seats for 18 students. We used the whiteboard to write everything we wanted to teach so the students could copy everything into their

notebooks. The next chapter is from my observations describing the club and the first moments with the students.

*“The place where we teach is a local youth club. It is a small little hut size of a small garage outside the school directors house. It has no electricity and there are only seats for 18 students. First day we taught English the children were nervous and quiet. Although they seemed to get excited about everything we taught. “*

Since we were in an area where the locals didn't have the opportunity or access to learn about the outside world, we decided that we wanted to teach the children about some of the issues that we thought they needed to learn more of. We decided to organise a recycling day where the children would go out and collect the trash that was covering the streets everywhere. We had a class where we educated the children about the environment and what are the benefits of recycling and dangers if they burn their trash as the people in Cambodia now do. After the class the children collected 17 big bags full of plastic and other trash that they could find from the streets near the youth club area. Unfortunately, Cambodia doesn't have a waste management system, so we had to burn the trash anyway. During the five weeks in the community we organised some other activities too for the children such as redecorating the youth club, dancing, football game and other fun games. One of the last activities was the visual activity for my research. On the last week of the project I spent one teaching day to conduct the activity to each class at a time with the help of the local volunteers. The volunteers helped with the translations because all the questions were written in English.

There were 34 students that took part in the visual activity, 12 of them boys and 22 girls. The participants were from grades 3 to 6 and aged 8 to 16. I conducted the visual activity by using simple questions. I wrote the questions to the whiteboard (appendix 1) in front of the youth club which the local volunteers translated in Khmer. There were five questions so that the activity would not be too long for the students to lose interest and that they could spend time answering each question. The first three questions were about their experience in the project Orkun. The last two were about how they see their future and what do they want to be when they grow up. I chose these questions because they would give an idea about how the future of children in

rural areas in Cambodia looks like from the children's point of view. The children could answer the questions by drawing a picture and/or writing their answers in Khmer. By answering in their own language, they were given the opportunity to answer as accurately and truthfully as possible. By drawing their answer they had the opportunity to use their imagination. Another reason for giving the opportunity to answer by drawing was to make the assignment easy to approach and possible for all students regardless of literacy skills. Few of the students chose to draw pictures, but most of them answered by writing their answers in Khmer. After the project I got help from volunteers in the local AIESEC in Cambodia to translate the answers in English. Unfortunately, the answer sheets got lost during my travels back from Cambodia, but fortunately I had already gathered all the information to my computer. There is no evidence of the papers with the answers but there are few pictures from the actual day of the activity.

After couple of weeks living and working in the community it was clear that the school director in the public primary school would be most qualified and reliable candidate to answer questions about the quality of education in the public primary school. He agreed to be the key informant and answer questions (appendix 2) with the help of a translator. One of the local volunteers did a great job preparing the questions in Khmer and helped us understand each other in the interview. The interview with the school director was held on the last week in the school in teacher's room where there were people coming and going every few minutes. The director took the interview seriously and answered all the questions thoroughly. It was a very comfortable and friendly situation. The director seemed to be motivated in making a change in the community and helping children to have a better future.

We worked together with the local volunteers for the most part of the project. That was essential for the project to be successful especially for us global volunteers to be able to teach English to children who's English speaking skills were not developed. The local volunteers helped with translations, they facilitated the lessons and helped organising activity days. They also took us around the village and helped with logistics and other important matters when ever we needed. Without the local volunteers I wouldn't have been able to conduct my research. It was very clear from the beginning that I wanted them to be the key informants for the part of learning about the achievements and progress of project Orkun. Both volunteers agreed to answer the

questions (appendix 3). Both interviews were held individually so they were able to have their own voice heard.

Throughout the process I gathered personal observations about things I saw, experienced, things I heard and discussed with people. I observed the surroundings, the everyday life in the community, how people lived, how they interacted with each other, how they worked together and how they spent their free time. I also made observations about educational issues; how the school system works in the commune and what is the quality of education in primary school. I focused on the students in the youth club and the living surroundings. I used a learning diary to gather my observations. Living with the local family in a neighbourhood where the locals would sometimes stop by at the house unannounced didn't leave much room for personal space let alone time for studying. I made notes when something came in to my mind, made videos to reflect on the things I had seen and experienced and wrote down my observations whenever I had a good opportunity.

## 5 ANALYTICAL METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

With the theme interviews I used categorizing of themes as an analysis method. The purpose of the analysis is to find similarities between phenomena that have arisen in the interview (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 99). The researcher should carefully examine the results of the research and use time to analyse connections and exceptions between themes. In the interview material analysis, quality of the material is more significant than quantity. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 99-100.) Because of the language barrier I kept the theme interviews short but comprehensive to get as much information as possible.

When analysing the research results of visual activity, I used quantification as a method to form a perspective on the future of children in Prolay commune. The aim was to find similarities with the answers given by the students. I tried to find new information by calculating how many children raised the same things in their answers.

Quantification can bring new perspectives to the interpretation of material and raise new phenomena (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 128).

When analysing the observations, the researcher should reflect personal point of views between theory and the collected material. New information can be produced when the analysis consists of two phases; simplifying and interpretation. The aim in simplifying observations is to generalize and combine the phenomena. (Ojasalo, Moilanen & Ritalahti 2009, 106-107.) After simplifying the material, I tried to find similarities between the themes found from the interviews and the visual activity. I compared the results and used the findings from observations to support the phenomena.

After processing and analysing the data, I compared the results reflecting to the knowledge-based framework. In the following chapters I will present the results of the research and their more detailed interpretation.

### 5.1 Quality of Education in Prolay commune public primary school

Accessibility is considered one of the requirements to ensure quality education (Incheon Declaration 2015, 7). According to the school director the school is free for all students which shows that the access to education is secured in Prolay commune in primary level. There are 872 students from which 402 are girls. Although the school is public and free to enrol for all children, there's no data to show how many children are still out of school. According to the school director there are 26 students, 12 girls and 14 boys, who have dropped out from the school this year. The main reason for students to drop out is poverty and immigration to another country. Children are moving with their parents because there are not enough job opportunities for them in their village. Incheon declaration emphasizes the importance of all children of all genders to be in school and getting quality education that is inclusive and equal (Incheon Declaration 2015, 7). To increase the number of enrolled students in the commune, the director says that the local volunteers and school teachers have campaigns around the commune where they visit families and advice parents about the importance of education and how it will benefit children's future. Children are invited

and encouraged to start school at the age of six. Campaigning in the village proves that the school is striving to reach all children and not leave anyone behind.

According to Incheon Declaration 2030 to achieve quality education there needs to be a 'no one is left behind' policy to achieve quality education (Incheon Declaration 2015, 7). Gender equality plays a leading role in this policy as it does the public primary school in Prolay commune. According to the school director the school has zero tolerance for any kind of violence or bullying. There hasn't been any reported gender-based bullying or violence this year. The school tries to promote gender equality by encouraging girls and boys to join the same activities the school provides. The director tells that every class has a girl and a boy leader who will help and support other students and teacher with different tasks. The leaders are selected by other students by a class vote.

Ministry of Education in Cambodia provides a curriculum that the school follows. According to the school director some subjects are difficult for the students to learn so teachers are required to show flexibility and understanding. Teachers are required to be empowered, motivated and professionally qualified for them to provide quality education (Incheon Declaration 2015, 7). Few of the teachers have finished their bachelor's degree but many of them are only high school graduates. This proves that the pupils may not get the quality of education as what is needed for them to reach the required level of literacy and numeracy skills. According to the director in order to improve the quality of teaching the school has technical meetings for the teachers to share knowledge with other teachers from other schools. Quality education also requires efficient processes and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress (Incheon Declaration 2015, 7). The school has a standard test for the students at the end of every year but according to the school director they lack a system to measure the results and progress of learning.

According to the school director many of the students will not continue to higher education because of the long distances and families don't have enough money to pay school fees. Students in Prolay commune can attend high school, but which is far away from the village and the children would need a motorbike to travel the distance. The closest University is even further and in Cambodia Universities have tuition fees. According to the Declaration 2030 everyone should have access to higher education

and have learning opportunities throughout lifetime (Incheon Declaration 2015, 8). The director's interview reveals that in 2018 there is still a lot of work to do in the commune to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all. The director is positive that in the future the quality of education will be much better.

## 5.2 Project Orkun achievements and feedback

Project Orkun aims to provide more learning opportunities for Cambodian youth. The goal is that by the end of the project children will have better cross-cultural understanding and they have improved their English skills (AIESEC Cambodia 2017, 10). Based on the results of the study most students at the youth club felt that they learned more English during the project. The local volunteers from Youth Star also said that in their experience project Orkun helped the students at the club learn more English. The results from the visual activity also reveals that many of the students learned other skills such as recycling, drawing and playing new games. The children also said that they learned more about environment and other cultures. Few of the children however felt that they didn't learn much English or any other skills.

Based on the results of the study the project was also helpful for the local volunteers. The volunteers said they learned to speak and understand more English during the project Orkun. They said that they could improve their teaching skills and they also learned about other cultures, recycling and environment. This shows that the project does not only provide more learning opportunities for children but also to the local volunteers working in the community.

The project seems to have had a positive impact since the local volunteers believe that with the help of project Orkun quality of education in the commune will be better in 2030. AIESEC focuses on promoting quality education in the project Orkun and aims to increase English skills in rural communities (AIESEC Cambodia 2017, 10). The local volunteers highlight that English is very important skill to learn for the children in Prolay commune. It is important for them to find a good job in the future. According to one of the local volunteers and the school director, global volunteers should spend even more time in the project teaching English to children and other members

of the community. They explained that five weeks is not enough time for children to improve their English.

From the results of the visual activity with the students can be concluded that the children had a positive experience in the project Orkun. Only four students from 34 said they didn't have a good experience which however is a result that shouldn't be ignored. This tells that there are parts that need to be developed in the project. From the interviews with the volunteers and the results from the visual activity with the students can be concluded that in general project Orkun has a positive impact on the children's education and that it can help the children to learn more English. Project can also increase cross-cultural understanding and support quality of education.

### 5.3 Future of children in Prolay commune

In this chapter I will discuss about the future of children in Prolay commune by presenting the results got from the visual activity with the students at the youth club. The study shows that children in Prolay commune want to be active citizen and they want to make an impact on their community. When asked, what was their dream job, 19 out of 34 said they wanted to become a teacher. Six of the students said they wanted to become a doctor. Others wanted to be either a police man, soldier, football player, dentist, singer, translator or an owner of a company. One student wanted to be a good citizen. Based on these results it can be concluded that many of the children in Prolay commune want to have a job where they can help other people.

The last part of the visual activity was to draw and write a timeline from that moment until 20 years from that. This assignment was to find out where would the children see themselves in twenty years from now. The results from this activity showed that 23 out of 34 students saw themselves graduating from secondary school and having a career. 20 students saw themselves graduating from high school and 9 out of 34 students saw themselves going to University. The number of children who saw that they will continue to University is not even one third of the children who took part in the activity. That shows that many of the children have low self-esteem and that they don't believe in their possibilities to pursue higher education. 20 out of 34 students

saw that their dream job is the same as what they see themselves doing in the future. 14 students described that they would have a career after finishing high school at the age of 20. While 9 out of 34 students didn't know what they would do in the future another 9 out of 34 had a very clear vision about their future. These results show that many of the children believe in having a secure future within their comfort zone. It can also be concluded that children don't have enough information about the education system or the knowledge about what is possible for them outside the village.

Project Orkun aims to empower children's self-esteem and increase their belief to change their life and the world (AIESEC Cambodia 2017, 10). The study shows that the children in Prolay commune want to be active and good citizen and many of them want to have a job that can help other people in the community. Many of them have a clear vision of their future and most of them want to continue having an education. With few exceptions excluded it seems that most of the children don't believe going to University is an option for them. What can also be concluded from the results is that what children see themselves doing in the future is directly connected to the idea of their dream job.

#### 5.4 Educational issues in Prolay commune

Throughout the project I have made observations about the living environment and educational issues in Prolay commune. What I found was that the living conditions are primitive and poor. The people in the commune don't have much even though they work hard to make ends meet. There is a sense of community in the village where neighbours help each other, and no paybacks are expected in return. It is recommended in the GEMR Cambodia workshop that in order to build the capacity for quality education inequalities need to be tackled in the education system (GEMR Cambodia workshop 2016). The observations show that Prolay commune public primary school has very poor conditions and recourses. There are limited amount textbooks and other school supplies, the classrooms don't have any light and some of the rooms don't even have a fan which is essential in a hot summer day. Some of the students don't have notebooks or pencils because their families can't afford to buy them.

Even though the school conditions and resources are poor and primitive the children came to school every day to learn. What can be concluded from the observations is that children are very eager and excited to learn new things. They don't speak or understand English well but being active learners in the class room shows that they want to learn more.

Pressure from the family effects on the decision to try to pursue applying to University. Children are expected to bring money to the family as soon as they can find a job and many of them feel obligated to stay and support the family. After finishing high school, the children would work in the farm or in the market or move to another province to find a job to support the family. Many of the locals are living with their families until marriage and everyone helps with house chores whenever possible. The following chapter is from my observations during the project. There I will describe what I learned from a conversation with one of the local volunteers.

*“Parents are not supportive of children to go to school, says one of the volunteers. They would prefer for their children to stay at home and help the parents with chores. The children are very keen to go to school and have a proper education. Still many children are forced to skip school because of their parents resists or they are moving to Thailand for work. There's only one parent-teacher meeting in a year when the children come back to school after their school holiday. Parents do not participate in any school activities or take part on anything that is related to school.”*

According to GEMR Cambodia workshop presentation, Cambodia should establish fuller range of lifelong learning opportunities for everyone (GEMR Cambodia workshop 2016.) The observations tell that people in Prolay commune need more learning opportunities after high school. The local people in the commune don't have the possibility to go to University because of multiple reasons. During the project I was able to have conversations with the locals about their thoughts and dreams. Here is a glimpse of a conversation I had with my host sister. She is talking about her dream to get a higher education in University and about the hardships she faces in her life.

*“We had a really good conversation today with my host sister. She told that she wants to find a job because she wants to go to University. She*

*would like to study law and work with something that has to do with legal issues. She told that after she graduated from high school all her money that she makes goes to her family. She now works as a teacher in public primary school, but it doesn't pay enough for her to pay university fee."*

Some of the locals seemed share same thoughts and many of them seemed to think that aiming to higher education was out of reach. There is a tuition fee for Universities in Cambodia and the distance to the nearest one is very far. Lack of job opportunities is also one of the reasons why people can't apply to University. People in Prolay commune need to find a job to save money for University. Saving money is also a struggle for most people when all their money goes to food and supporting their family.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Children in Prolay commune have access to education, but not all children go to school. Poverty is one of the main reasons why many children stay at home rather than go to school. The members in the community are trying to reach all children coming from poor families by campaigning in the village. The education is equitable, inclusive and gender equal in the commune. The quality of teaching is not at the level of high-quality education and teachers should be more qualified. For the commune to provide quality education for the students should the teachers be educated in University level. The commune should pay attention to the quality of education and the amount of learning opportunities it is providing for the students. There are not enough opportunities available to the people in the commune in a higher educational level. The commune needs support to improve education, especially in teaching English.

Children in the commune are active students and eager to learn new things. They want to get a job after graduating from high school and many of them see their future as being similar as any other people in the commune. Even if children want to be active members of the community, they do not know what else can be possible for them

outside the village. They need to be encouraged and provided with more information of the possibilities and educated about the issues in the outside world.

Project Orkun is important for the children and other members in the community for learning English. In the project children can learn about the issues in the outside world. The project provides more learning opportunities for the students in the commune and supports the goal of achieving quality education. Global volunteers have the possibility to influence on young people's lives in the commune and create a space for empowerment, learning and cultural understanding. So that global volunteers can provide meaningful, fun and inclusive activities for all children, AIESEC should develop the content of the project further.

### 6.1 Proposal for AIESEC

I have created a proposal (appendix 4) for AIESEC to further develop their work in rural areas in Cambodia. The aim of the development proposal is to raise issues that the organisation should pay attention to when developing new projects. The proposal is an important tool for AIESEC in Cambodia, but the organisation can also benefit from it in a global level. The proposal gives new information on what can be done to achieve quality education in developing countries.

When it comes to supporting quality education in Cambodia the local AIESEC should pay attention to what they can do in the communities to make accessibility, equity and inclusion, gender equality, quality education and lifelong learning opportunities realized. When the organisation sends volunteers to communities what are the things the organisation should advice the volunteers to prepare to and what the project itself should include so that the volunteers can support quality education. What are the actions global volunteers can do to help the students learn more English and empower them to believe in themselves and their abilities to change their lives? In this development proposal I will introduce a plan what the local AIESEC in Cambodia can do to tackle these issues.

The proposal for exchange participants volunteering with AIESEC in Cambodia includes three plans for action; campaigns in the communities, creating fun and educa-

tional activities in the projects and a suggestion how to interact and encounter the children and youth. The exchange participants, referred as global volunteers in this thesis, have the possibility to influence on the children's lives and mindset. They are respected in the community and the children look up to them. That brings a great responsibility that a volunteer should not ignore. When the volunteer meets the children, the interaction should be encouraging and positive. The volunteers should encounter the children genuinely and equally, considering all genders and leaving no one behind. To raise the self esteem of the children, interaction should be empowering and inclusive. The volunteers have great impact on the children which means that they should respect the responsibility of acting as influencers and working as educators and global volunteers.

The global volunteers should organise campaigns in the communities where they will work in their projects. The education in Cambodia is free in primary and secondary level which means that the children have access to education. Poverty and lack of knowledge still leave many children out of education. Advising families about the benefits of education and encouraging children to go to school are important actions that can increase the number of enrolled students. Global volunteers have an opportunity to use their role as an influencer in the communities. AIESEC should encourage the volunteers to organise campaigns during their projects to educate the families and children about the benefits of having an education and what is possible for them in their future. The campaigns should be targeted to reach poor families and out-of-school children.

Children need informal learning to support formal learning in school. In the projects global volunteers should create fun, educational activities for the children that can support children to learn more English and other skills. The activities should be inclusive and suitable for all genders. Global volunteers should encourage out-of-school children to join the activities, so they can have a positive experience about learning situation. Building up children's self-esteem is one of the most powerful things that can help children believe in themselves and their abilities to change their lives. AIESEC should advice the global volunteers to create empowering activities where children can have fun, experience moments of success and learn new things.

## 7 SUMMARY

Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be inclusive and equal for all. Despite the living conditions, social or cultural differences, education should reach everyone, and it should be free and available throughout a lifetime. Children in Prolay commune need more learning opportunities and support with their education. To achieve the SDG 4 in 2030 more actions should be done to improve the quality of education in the commune. Public primary school needs more qualified, well-trained teachers and a system to follow the progress of the learning outcomes. The education in Prolay commune is inclusive and equal but still many children are left without an education because of poverty, immigration or people's lack of knowledge. English is one of the most important skills children in Prolay commune need to learn so they can have a good job in their future. Projects such as the project Orkun can help children learn English and support their education.

AIESEC can help children in Cambodia reach more learning opportunities and increase their self-esteem in national projects such as project Orkun. Therefore, it is important that AIESEC in Cambodia will continue their projects and the developing work in rural areas. The action plan for the volunteers in AIESEC will help the organisation when they are developing current projects and creating new ones. When the organisation puts the action plan into work, can many out-of-school children be reached in the communities. The action plan needs to be implemented in AIESECs projects to raise children's self-esteem and to empower them to believe in themselves and their abilities to change their lives and the world. The children need to be educated about the issues in the outside world and about the matters they can do to help their community. They need support and encouragement to believe that they have the possibility to change their lives and that they can also have an impact to the people around them and to the environment. Global volunteers have an important role as influencers and educators. Exchange participants should implement the action plan when they are volunteering with AIESEC in projects in Cambodia. Despite the duration of the project the impact can be great on the community and on the children.

There is still a lot of work to be done to improve the quality of education in Prolay commune. If the commune receives support for teaching the education can be of high

quality by 2030. With the support of exchange participants from AIESEC the goal for quality education can be possible to achieve.

### 7.1 Reflection and learning outcomes

When I entered my final year in HUMAK University of Applied Sciences and it was time to start the process of my thesis, I knew I wanted to combine my final internship with my bachelor's thesis. From the beginning of my studies I knew I wanted to complete my internship and thesis in a less developed country. I've had a desire to help people especially children in need ever since I was a child myself. As a soon-to-be community educator graduate, I can help children with the knowledge and experience I've gained from my studies and internships. The final internship as global volunteer in project Orkun was very special for me because I was able to travel to Cambodia. I have dreamed about traveling there for many years. The project Orkun was one of the most educational experiences. Not only was I able to have an impact on the lives of many children in Cambodia but I was also able to make memories that I will cherish for many years to come.

As we live in a world where internet and social media is on the reach of our fingertips the possibilities are endless when it comes to supporting quality education. People even in poor communities these days have the access to social media and it is sometimes the greatest platform where they can learn new things from and connect with people. Teaching how to use technology and search information from the internet is very important for the people in the communities. The global volunteers may choose to stay in touch with the people they've met and continue empowering them even after the projects. Communication after the projects can be also very important for the volunteers. I wanted to stay in touch with few of the people in the community because it is important for me to know what is happening in the community and how are the children doing in there. After the project as I had already travelled back home, I learned just how big of an impact me and my co-volunteer had on the community. Few weeks after the project I was informed that the local volunteers and the school teachers have continued to clean the streets in the village. They have decided to con-

tinue to improve their environment and to keep recycling days in the community. This showed a very concrete and positive example of the potential impact the project and the global volunteers can have on the people in the community.

Community educators are professionals in advocacy work. They have a great role in the civil society as multi-talented educators and professionals in development work. Community educators can look at issues that needs to be developed from many different perspectives. When it comes to developing work in poor communities, community educators have the competency and knowledge to make the needed changes or development suggestions. Having completed my internship and the study for this thesis in project Orkun I found that I have the capacity to act as a community developer. I learned that civic activity plays a major role in the development of communities. Post-process reflection has helped me to understand the importance of professionalism in development work. By bringing well trained educators to poor communities, it can support quality education. Thus, can less developed countries achieve a better economy and prosperity. For that reason, this study is not only useful for AIESEC but also for the civic society. Actors in the civil society can also benefit from the information gained from the results of the study. This thesis provides important information about the issues in less developed communities that needs to be tackled. AIESEC and actors in the civil society can find the findings from this study useful in their development work and projects in developing countries.

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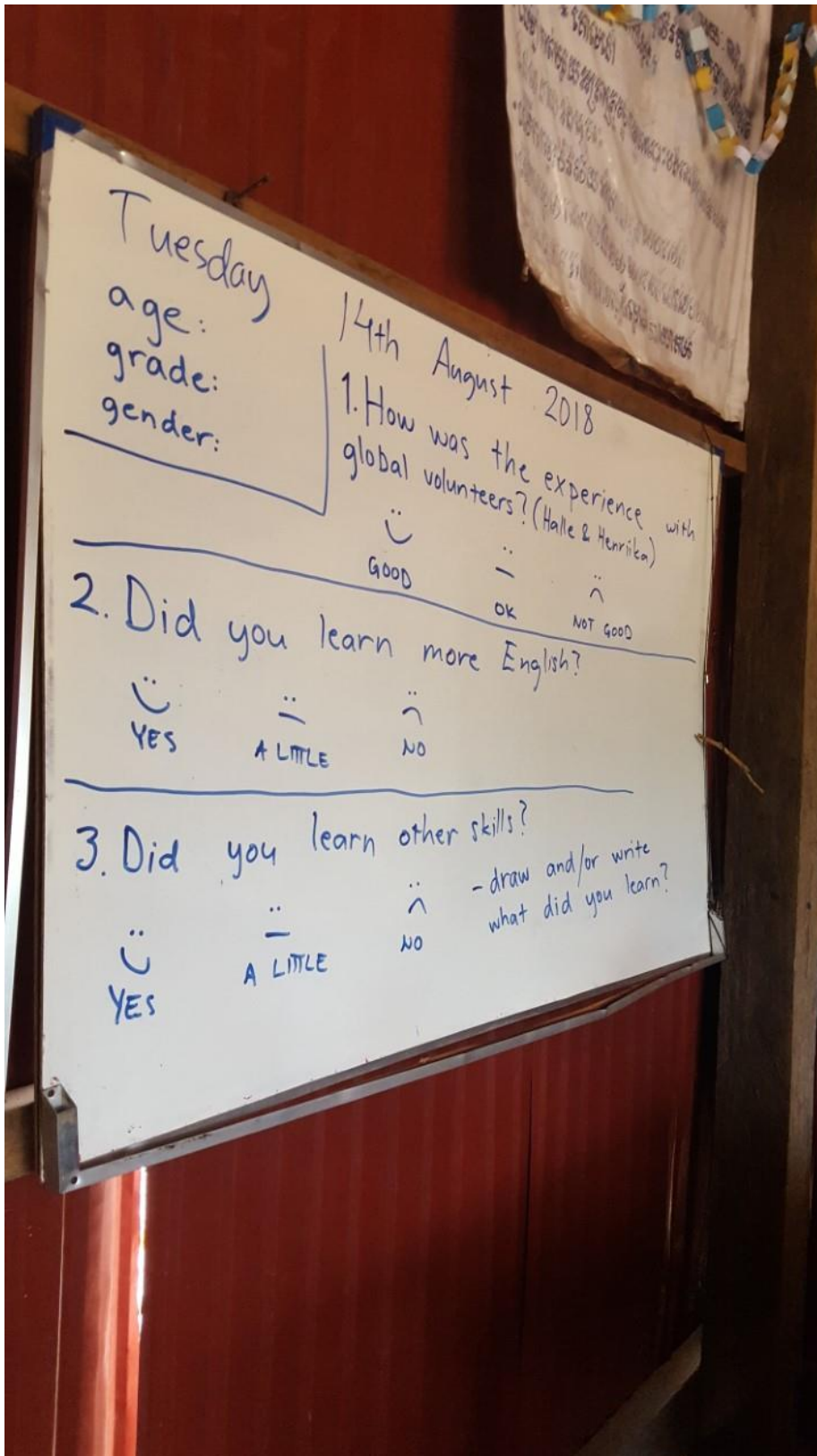
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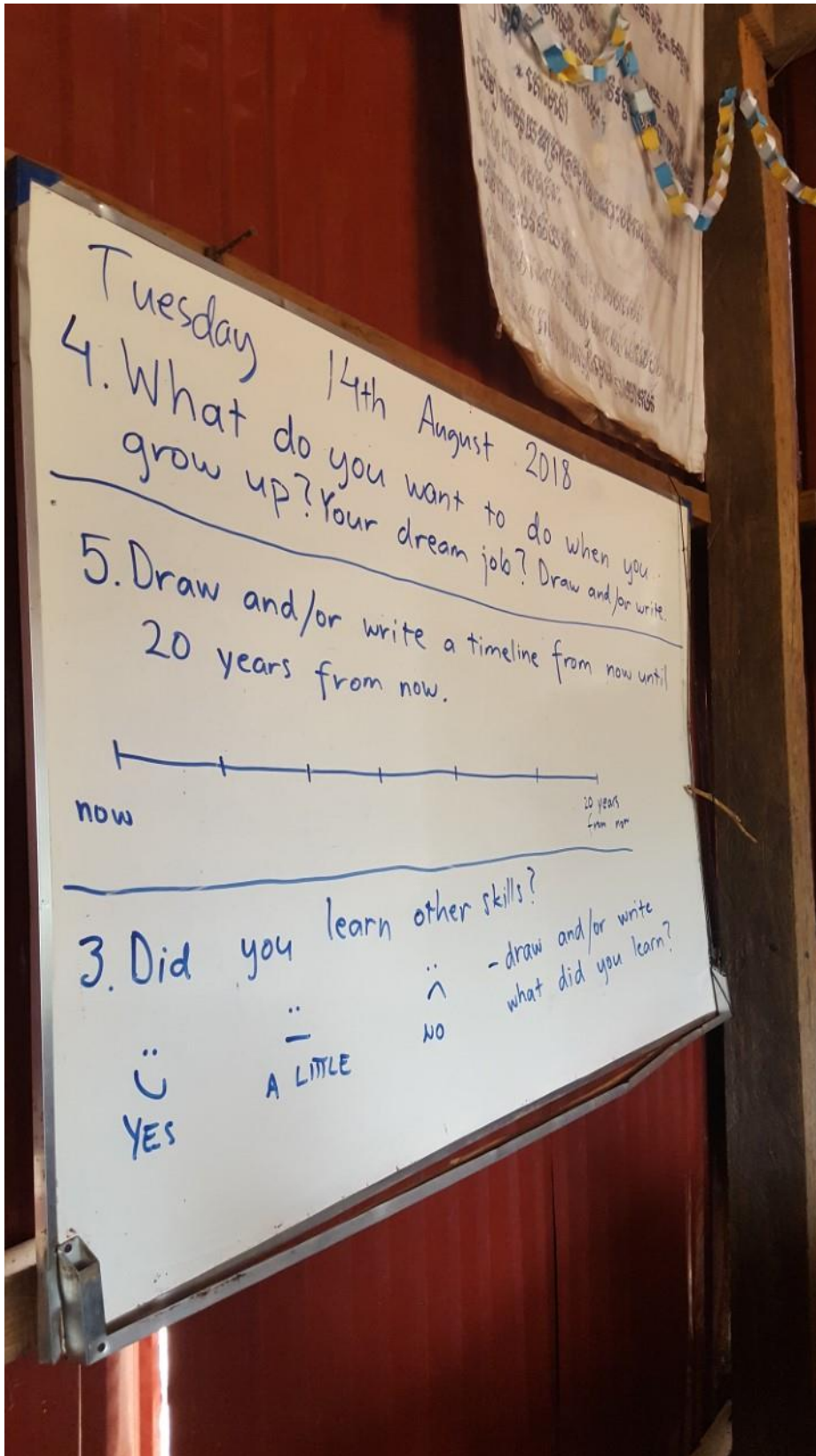
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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1(1)



## APPENDIX 1(2)



## APPENDIX 2

### PRIMARY SCHOOL DIRECTOR – THEME INTERVIEW

#### Background information:

- Name
- Profession and education level
- How long have you worked in the school?
- Do you know what is Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals? What is goal 4?

#### 1 Access to education

1. How many children are there in your school?
2. Have there been any drop outs in the past year?
3. Are there many children not enrolled in school in the area?
4. Is the school free for all children? How about supplies or uniforms?

#### 2 Equity and inclusion

5. Are there any actions taken by the school or the commune to ensure all children are able to attend school? (poor families, children who live far away...)
6. What actions are taken to increase the number of enrolled students in the commune?
7. What actions are taken to increase the number of graduates?

#### 3 Gender equality

8. How many boys and girls did graduate in the past year? Has there been any change in the number of graduates?
9. Has there been any reported gender-based bullying or violence in the past year?
10. What actions are taken in your school to avoid gender-based discrimination or violence?

#### 4 Quality

11. What is the required education level for teachers in your school?
12. How do you measure the progress of education in your school?
13. How do you develop the quality of education in your school?

#### 5 Lifelong learning opportunities

14. How many of the students in your school continued to secondary school last year? Has there been any change in numbers?
15. Where is the nearest high school? What about university?
16. How many students usually continues to higher education from the commune?
17. What are the chances for the children in the commune to continue education in university?
18. How does the future look like for the children in the commune?

#### Questions about project ORKUN:

- What do you think about project ORKUN?
- Was the experience valuable (important) to the students in the school?
- Was the experience valuable (important) to the commune?
- How was the cooperation between the school and the volunteers?
- In your opinion, what needs to be improved?

## APPENDIX 3

### **VOLUNTEERS – THEME INTERVIEW**

#### **Part 1 – Skills learned in the project ORKUN**

1. Have the students learned any new skills in the project ORKUN? What skills have they learned?
2. Have the students improved their English during the project ORKUN? Speaking, understanding, writing?
3. Have the students improved their school performance during the project ORKUN?
4. Have the Youth Star volunteers learned more English or any other new skills?

#### **Part 2 - Importance of the project ORKUN**

5. How important do you think the project ORKUN is for learning new skills? (children, volunteers)
6. How important do you think the project ORKUN is for learning English? (children, volunteers)
7. Do you think the project ORKUN is valuable (important) to the students?
8. Do you think that the project ORKUN is valuable (important) to their future?

#### **Part 3 - Impacts on the community**

9. Has project ORKUN had any impacts on the community? How?
10. Has project ORKUN had any impacts on other members in the community? (not students)
11. Has there been any change in attitudes towards education during project ORKUN?

#### **Part 4 – Cooperation between AIESEC and Youth Star**

12. How was the cooperation between the partner organisation (Youth Star) volunteers and global volunteers (AIESEC)?
13. Was the experience valuable to the partner organisation (Youth Star)?
14. What should be improved?

#### **Part 5 – Quality of education in 2030**

15. How do you think that the quality of education will be in the year 2030 in the commune?
16. Do you think that project ORKUN will help with reaching the goal?

## APPENDIX 4

## AIIESEC - SUPPORTING QUALITY EDUCATION

### Proposal for exchange participants volunteering with AIIESEC in Cambodia



This proposal has been created so that the local AIIESEC in Cambodia can further develop their projects in rural areas. It is an outcome of a bachelor's degree thesis. The research for this thesis was conducted in one of AIIESEC projects in Cambodia. The purpose of this proposal is to introduce an action plan for the exchange participants volunteering in projects with AIIESEC in Cambodia. The objective of the plan is to increase awareness of the importance of teaching and increase children's participation in education. In addition, the aim is to provide empowering and encouraging education for children and youth in rural areas in Cambodia.

#### 1. Campaigns

- Exchange participants should organise campaigns in the communities to advise children and families about the benefits of education
- Exchange participants should use their role as an influencer when volunteering in projects
- Exchange participants should encourage out-of-school children to attend school
- The campaigns should be targeted to reach poor families and children

#### 2. Activities

- Exchange participants should create fun, educational activities for children and youth in the communities
- The activities should be empowering, inclusive and suitable for all genders
- The activities should create moments of success for children and youth
- Exchange participants should encourage out-of-school children to join the activities

#### 3. Interaction and encounter

- Exchange participants should keep in mind that they have a responsibility as educators and as influencers
- When working with children and youth the interaction should be encouraging and positive
- Encounter with children and youth should be genuine and equal considering all genders

